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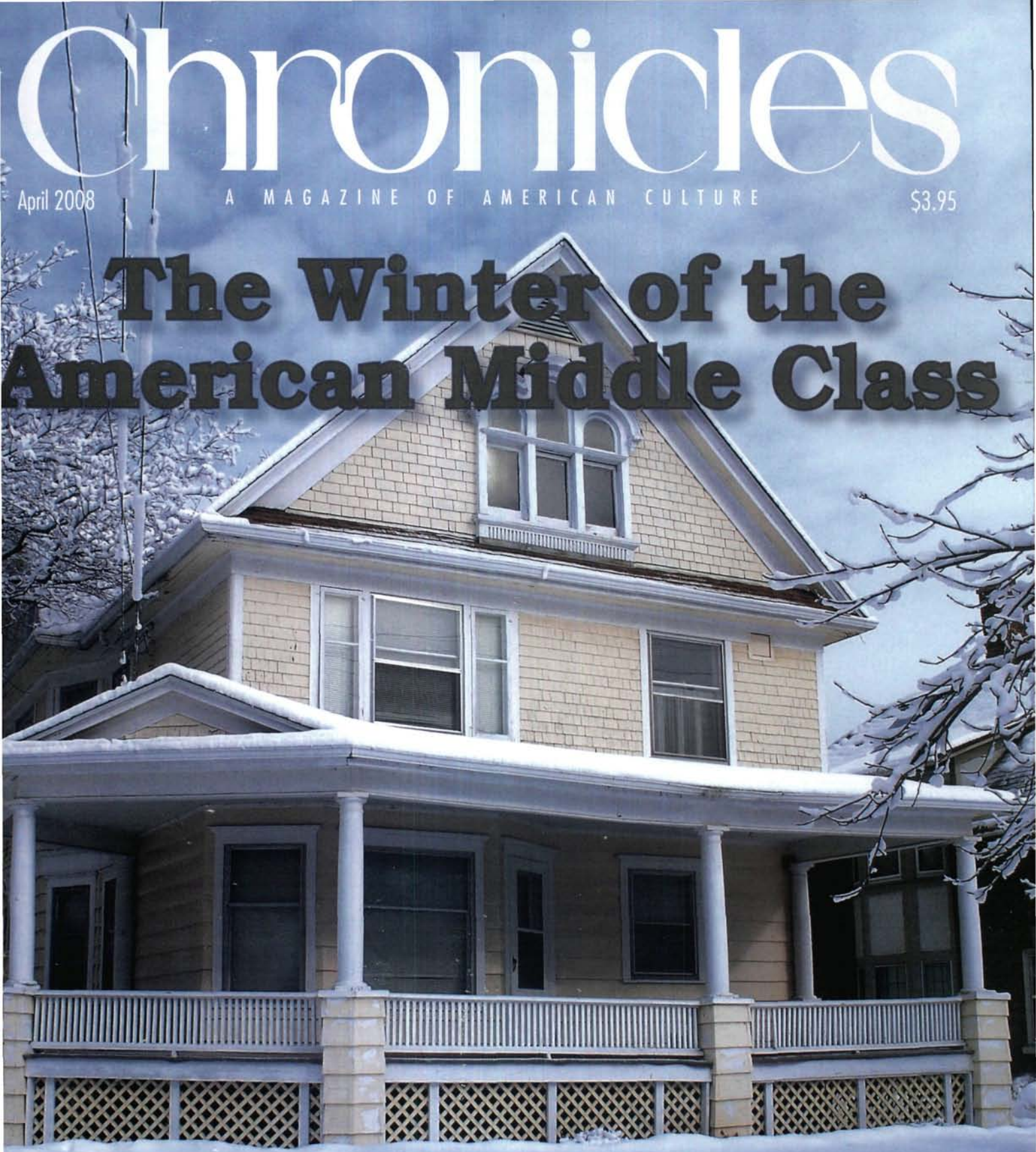

The Winter of the American Middle Class

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David A. Hartman • Thomas Fleming

plus an original short story by Anthony Bukoski

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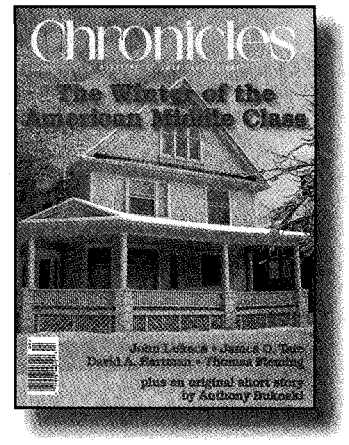

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Western Violence

In "The Curious Career of Billy the Kid" (*Views*), Gregory McNamee writes that, "For most of the 19th century, the American West was a fairly tranquil place," adding in the same paragraph that, "In cities such as Denver, Seattle, and even Tombstone, few citizens knew how to use a firearm, owned a gun, or had need to." For the first assertion, he seems to credit Richard White's *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, but doesn't likewise provide a source for the monumental gun ignorance of the citified populace of that age.

Let us set aside the fact that tranquility is often in the eye (or blinders) of the beholder and that, for half of the 19th century, Denver, Seattle, and Tombstone were little more than mining digs, Indian villages, or less: Since even an inner-city thug of today can somehow manage the intricacies of firearm use, how exactly does Mr. McNamee explain this inability of our 19th-century forefathers? For assistance with his answer, perhaps he could ask—although he appears to have already—Michael Bellesiles.

—John West
Granite Falls, WA

Mr. McNamee Replies:

Mr. West is misreading my intention, perhaps deliberately. Bellesiles's work on gun culture was discredited long ago, of course, for which reason it would be a curious strategy to consult it. That particular bit of NRA baiting, then, won't work. No ignorance on the part of the pioneers is involved, either; the point is that those city folk left it to the police to do the policing, relied on hunters and farmers and ranchers to provide their food, and busied themselves doing the ordinary work of building civilization without spending much time bickering over the Second Amendment or visiting violence on one another. I doubt that I am the only one who thinks that an improvement over the modern condition, the bickering included.

On the Man With No Name

While I greatly enjoyed reading Roger D. McGrath's "Westerns" (*View*, February) and R. Clay Reynolds's "The Death of the Western" (*View*), I was rather surprised by the absence of Sergio Leone's name in both pieces. Leone's four Italian Westerns from the 1960's had an immeasurable impact on the genre; it can be argued that his films revitalized it as it started to decline. And, while Leone's films are considered by some to be parodies or spoofs, and by others to be intentionally subversive of the genre, the fact is that Leone loved American Westerns (he was a huge devotee of John Ford's films and knew most of them by heart) and was saddened by the psychological, "serious" turn they began to take in the late 1950's and early 60's.

While Leone undoubtedly had it in mind to "demythologize" the West to a certain extent, this wasn't done in a spirit of disdain or negativity, but out of a sense of respect and a felt loss. He called his films "fairy tales for adults," and he regretted that this fantastic, larger-than-life aspect of the Western was disappearing. His attempt to bring this magic back to the Western is most evident in his masterpiece *Once Upon a Time in the West* (the original Italian title, in translation, was *Once Upon a Time There Was the West*), which features numerous Western archetypes and dozens of references to American films, including many of Ford's. Leone managed to make a film that served as both an homage to the Western and a depiction of the end of the Western myth, symbolized by the arrival of the railroads and commercialism, and the departure, forever, of the Western hero. Leone's film was thus an elegy for both the mythic Western and the mythic American West itself. Given that understanding, director John Boorman's statement about the film makes a good deal of sense: "It is both the greatest and last Western."

—Rob Grano
Moon Township, PA

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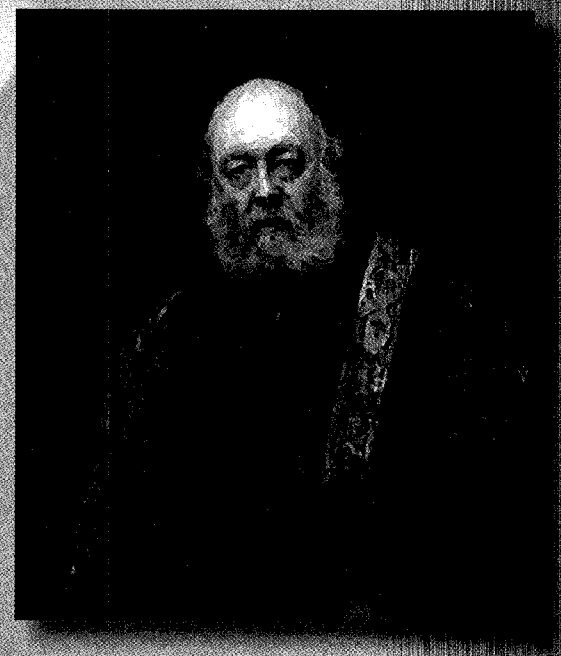

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by Leon Hadar

Obama and the "Jewish Vote"

"Concern in Jerusalem: Obama Is Getting Closer to the Presidency" was the headline on the front page of *Ma'ariv*, an Israeli daily. "Sources in Jerusalem are worried over the erosion in the support for Hillary Clinton who is considered more supportive of Israel," the paper reported after the Iowa caucuses, reflecting the rising sentiment among Israeli officials that Barack Hussein Obama "is not good for the Jews."

The sense of Obama hysteria among many Israelis was evident in a caricature published in *Ma'ariv*, in which Obama is seen painting the White House black. Get it? You can imagine the reaction in Washington if an Arab newspaper published a drawing of Joe Lieberman painting Stars of David on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Not wanting to be accused of "interfering" in U.S. presidential elections, both Israeli officials and heads of American Jewish organizations (a.k.a. "Jewish leaders") have refrained from expressing their concerns over Obama in public. They probably recall the political backlash among Democrats when then-Israeli Ambassador to Washington Yitzhak Rabin made it clear that he wanted to see Nixon beat McGovern in 1972. (Though Nixon doubled his share of the Jewish vote from the measly 17 percent he received four years earlier, McGovern received 65 percent of the Jewish vote.)

This time, there is a danger that the perception that Israel and her supporters were speaking out against Obama—"No, you can't!"—would lead to accusations that "the Jews" were responsible for sabotaging the chances of an African-American winning the White House. At the same time, if Obama does become the first black U.S. president, the earlier kvetching by leading American Jews about Obama could place the Jewish state on the losing side, creating the expectation that the new White House occupant owes it nothing.

That may explain why some Jewish Democrats who support Israel have jumped on the Obama bandwagon. Hence, Martin Peretz, editor-in-chief of the *New Republic*, assured his readers that "Friends of Israel—and Jews" can "trust Obama." Unfortunately,

> many . . . are alarmed by e-mails, saying that Obama's middle name is Hussein (true, and so what?), that he is a Muslim and not a Christian (untrue, and so what if it was?), that he took the oath of office as a Senator on the Koran rather than the Bible (utterly untrue and, once again, so what?).

The notion that Jewish voters are waiting for a green light from their "leaders," or for Peretz to stamp the "pro-Israel" label on this or that candidate, is ludicrous. Exit polls suggest that Jewish voters chose Obama or Hillary Clinton based on differences in age and sex. An elderly Jewish woman was more inclined to vote for Hillary, while a young Jewish man was likely to favor Obama. There were no indications that the perceived differences in the two candidates' views on Israel affected the Jewish vote in the primaries.

Among members of the "organized" American-Jewish community, including the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the concern over Obama stems from the fact that, when it comes to Israel, he is an unknown quantity. Yes, he has made all the "right noises" on Israel. But so did Jimmy Carter before winning the Democratic nomination in 1976, only to adopt a more "evenhanded" approach after taking office.

There have been long and bitter disputes between blacks and Jews on the political left. Against the backdrop of Jesse Jackson's earlier fights to win the Democratic presidential nomination and Louis Farrakhan's popularity, there is a certain unease among Jews active in Democratic politics, a feeling that young blacks on the left tend to sympathize with Third World people—the Palestinians, for example—and may even harbor latent antisemitic sentiments.

These concerns were expressed indirectly by one Jewish "leader," the head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Malcolm Hoenlein, who, during a press conference in Jerusalem in early February, referred to the "atmosphere" that surrounded the Obama campaign.

"All the talk about change, but without defining what that change should be, is an opening for all kind of mischief," Hoenlein said. "Of course Obama has plenty of Jewish supporters and there are many Jews around him," he continued. "But there is a legitimate concern over the zeitgeist around the campaign." Hoenlein specifically cited the fact that Obama has criticized Hillary Clinton for voting to include the Iranian Republican Guards on the list of terror organizations.

Hoenlein has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Iraq war and has urged the Bush administration to take military action against Iran. What seems to be worrying him is the prospect that Obama, if elected, could start withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq and negotiating with Iran and Syria, and that such policies are supported by the majority of Democratic voters and the American people—and, ironically, most American Jews. Don't be surprised, then, if Hoenlein and the rest of the neoconservative forces begin marketing Republican presidential candidate John McCain as the "Israeli candidate" who would keep a "Hussein" out of the White House.

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CAMPUS TERROR

At 3:00 P.M. on February 14, I was sitting in the political-science graduate assistants' office in DuSable Hall at Northern Illinois University. Ten of us were chatting, waiting for 3:30 classes.

At 3:10, my friend's cell phone rang. "Joe just called," she said after hanging up, her face ashen and her eyes wide. "He says there are people streaming out of Cole. He sounds scared." She broke off. "If he's messing with me, I'm going to kill him."

DuSable is right behind Cole Hall, so several of us rushed to the windows. Moments later, the assistant chairman of the department rang the office. My friend Geoff answered. A few seconds into the conversation, he waved frantically for us to shut the door, then hung up: "We're supposed to lock ourselves in here until they know what's going on." For the next hour, we waited. The news reports online were conflicting, and our cell phones were barely getting service.

There had been a gunman. One was dead. One was injured. Two were dead. By 3:20, the university had posted a notice online, warning that the shooter was still at large. A little later, news reports announced that he had killed himself. Finally, around 4:20, someone knocked on the office door. "Police," barked a harsh voice.

Geoff opened the door. "Is it safe to leave?"

"Well, I wouldn't say safe," the officer answered, "but head toward the childcare center. Keep your hands in view. Don't go to your cars."

I followed my friends into the hallway. Two officers stood there, holding rifles across their chests. Another, his finger on the trigger of his pistol, was positioned at the top of the staircase. We held our hands out to our sides and trooped down two flights of stairs and out the back doors. The first sound to greet us was the beating of choppers flying overhead. "O my God," said my friend Kevin. I looked in the direction he was facing. The entire parking lot—and it's a sizeable one—was a sea of flashing blue and red.

Even if we had wanted to get our cars, we couldn't have gone anywhere; the clogged traffic would have kept us from making any tracks. So we walked to a nearby bar, where we knew the news would be aired. The death toll started rising. Two. Then four. Then five. Then, finally, six, including the shooter. Eighteen wounded. We were all receiving frantic phone calls from friends and family. Pacing the parking lot in the cold, I lashed out to my mother over the phone. "Nobody could do anything! These were a bunch of 18-year-olds, stuck in a lecture hall, with nowhere to go! They were like a bunch of sitting ducks, just waiting to die, and there's nothing any of them could do!"

The days since have been surreal. The university is closed for a week, and most students have left campus. Those of us who remain try to stay busy. We clean our apartments; we go grocery shopping; we meet up for dinner or drinks. None of us can focus on our readings or papers. Every now and then, we stop moving, and some kind of curtain seems to lift. In church yesterday morning, a little boy stamped his feet on the wooden pew, and several of us jumped. I can't keep from looking over my shoulder when I head down the long hallway to my apartment.

So what do we do? It is only a matter of time until another man in a trench coat or wearing a ski mask aims his shotgun into a crowd of 18-year-olds. Maybe if some students had been armed, there would have been more deaths amid panicked crossfire. But really, how many are going to conceal and carry? And among those who would, how many will have the presence of mind to pull out their handguns and fire back? I'm guessing not too many. If we don't allow our students to protect themselves, then we must train our faculty and graduate assistants to protect them.

Maybe looser gun laws and better protection won't help. Where there is a will, there is a way. But I never want to feel again like I felt on Thursday. I never want to be locked in an office with nothing but a wooden door between me and a killer with a shotgun and four pistols. Maybe, if I had been carrying my own pistol, I wouldn't have been so afraid. Maybe, if one of the students in that lecture hall had a gun, some of the others would have mustered the courage to fight back.

Logistically speaking, NIU was prepared. Police arrived within seconds of the first 911 call, closely followed by a host of city, county, and state police. Our faculty have been wonderful, opening their homes and offering their time to console students. The outpouring of emotional support and practical advice from the community, churches, and other universities—including Virginia Tech—has been a blessing to us all. And of course, with five weapons, the death toll could have been much higher.

But five students are dead, and I'm scared when I leave my apartment.

—Nicole Kooistra

CROSS KERFUFFLE

If you want know what's wrong with higher education, look no further than Gene Nichol, the recently ousted president of Virginia's College of William and Mary. First, he banished an iconic cross from the chapel in the school's Sir Christopher Wren Building, the oldest continuously operating college building in the United States. Then, he let a traveling porn show stake its tent on campus for the third time. Though Nichol's welcome departure in February incited some protests on campus and prompted a member of the school's board of visitors to resign, the angry alumni who drove him from office may well prove that the university is not quite dead.

Nichol's trouble began in Octo-

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ber 2006, when he ordered the Wren Cross removed. His reason? The cross, a gift from Williamsburg's Bruton Episcopal Church in 1906, offended non-Christian students. In a letter to Nichol, religious-studies professor Marc Raphael claimed that some prospective students, touring William and Mary with their Jewish parents, rejected Thomas Jefferson's *alma mater* after their eyes fell on the cross.

"The William and Mary community," Nichol opined in an op-ed in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "is generous and embracing—it touches, it entwines, it reaches past barriers to form loves and friendships that endure. These bonds are the best part of the life of the College, old and new. Polarization is not our way. We're a Tribe.

"But most alumni would be saddened to read the first two paragraphs of [Raphael's letter]. In embracing our own religious practices, we have perhaps thought less of the impact on others. We have not understood, I think, that some don't come here, or feel less welcome here, because they hail from different religious traditions. What has sometimes been true for Jewish students is now increasingly replicated by Muslim, Hindu and other non-Christians—from across the globe."

It won't surprise anyone to learn that Nichol, according to *savethewrencross.org*, is a made member of the American Civil Liberties Union, or that he loaded the original ukase he used to whack the cross with standard ACLU boilerplate.

The problem Nichol suggests—that Jews, Muslims, and Shintoists might think William and Mary is an outpost of Christendom—is flatly preposterous. First, most Jews and Muslims aren't offended. Second, like most colleges and universities, including the Catholic variety, William and Mary is secular, at best, and anti-Christian, at worst, and the Wren Cross was there for a century not because students and faculty are fervid Christians, but because a secular Saladin had yet to appear on campus. Nichol took up the multicultural scimitar.

The school has not always been a stage for anti-Christan antics and sex shows. As alumnus Vince Haley observed in *National Review*, 11 of William and Mary's 26 presidents have been ministers, and the school's 315-year-old Royal Charter is explicitly Christian. The school was founded "to the end that the Church of Virginia may be furnished with a seminary of ministers of the gospel . . . and that the Christian faith may be propagated amongst the Western Indians, to the glory of Almighty God."

Nichol's reward for his anticross crusade? One unamused alumnus scotched a $12-million donation to the school, and dozens of other alumni followed suit. The squeeze apparently had some effect: In August 2007, school officials put the cross back on display in the chapel, although not as a religious object and not on the altar. Instead, from its glass case, it merely helps demonstrate the Anglican roots of the school. One wag suggested the glass protected unsuspecting passers-by from dangerous "Jesus rays." Still, the cross went back.

With the Cross Kerfuffle resolved, Nichol, in early February, permitted the third annual presentation of the Sex Workers' Art Show. Six days after the carnal cabaret, the board of governors lowered the curtain on Nichol. They did not renew his contract, so he resigned two days later. Regardless of the cross and carnality, it may have come down to money. As the campus paper editorialized, Nichol's "relationships with donors soured and serious ethical questions arose concerning whether he knowingly misrepresented fundraising figures." Del. Bob Marshall of Virgina's 13th District publicly accused Nichol of "intentional and calculated misrepresentation of the truth" about the lost $12-million donation.

Undoubtedly, the Wren Cross didn't much fortify the Christian character of most students over the past 30 years. Yet when a left-wing indifferentist took it down, the alumni's residual faith, or perhaps only their cultural affinity for the cross, was strong enough to inspire their rebellion. Hope, as Pope said, springs eternal.

—R. Cort Kirkwood

GEORGIANS IN LONDONISTAN

In February, when 52-year-old Georgian billionaire and political exile Badri Patarkatsishvili died at his Surrey mansion, British media wondered if this might be a Georgian version of the Litvinenko affair. Patarkatsishvili had been a supporter of President Mikheil Saakashvili's 2003 "Rose Revolution" but had lately been in opposition to the Georgian president, running against him in January's presidential elections, which were called by Saakashvili after months of political turmoil and the imposition of emergency rule. Patarkatsishvili had fled the country after Tbilisi aired a recording of him allegedly offering a Georgian security official $100 million to support the opposition. Accused of planning a coup and "terrorist acts" against Georgian officials, Badri left for Britain.

Patarkatsishvili had claimed his enemies were planning his assassination, at one point commenting that even his 120-man security contingent wouldn't be enough to stop them. To back up his claims, Badri released an audiotape allegedly of a conversation between a Georgian interior-ministry official and Chechen gangster Uvais Akhmadov, a member of a group notorious for kidnapping and contract murders. (Akhmadov and his gang are widely believed to be behind the kidnapping and murder of three British engineers and one New Zealander, whose severed heads were found on a Chechen roadside in 1998.) The Georgian official is heard asking Akhmadov to make Patarkatsishvili "completely disappear."

A preliminary examination of the body indicated that Patarkatsishvili had died of a heart attack, and Badri had been complaining of chest pains before his demise. Nevertheless, foul play cannot be ruled out at this stage. According to press accounts, toxicology testing may take ten weeks to bear results, and the memory of the radioactive poisoning of Russian exile Aleksandr Litvinenko still lingers. Badri was a longtime business partner of Litvinenko's patron, fallen oligarch

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Boris Berezovsky, and his friendship with one of the Russians accused in Litvinenko's assassination, Andrei Lugovoy, has only increased suspicions of homicide.

As is usual in the shadowy politics of the former Soviet Union, claims of plots and counterplots are being made in Georgia, Russia, and Britain. Was Badri assassinated by the Saakashvili regime, taken down by an as-yet-undetected poison? Many of Patarkatsishvili's friends and supporters think so, and the political opposition in Georgia is playing up the assassination story to discredit Saakashvili. Meanwhile, in Russia, the expected claims that Berezovsky did it have already been voiced by journalist and Duma Deputy Aleksandr Khinshteyn, widely believed to be a mouthpiece for one of the "special services" clans in Putin's entourage. According to Khinshteyn's story, Badri had fallen out with Berezovsky and was counting on Russian support against Saakashvili, who is seen in Russia as a puppet of Washington. By courting the support of the Putin Kremlin, Badri had betrayed his old friend Berezovsky. Khinshteyn's claims are lent some support by rumors circulating earlier of a Berezovsky-Patarkatsishvili rift.

Patarkatsishvili's friendship with Lugovoy has only increased suspicions of foul play. According to sources in London, Badri had recently been in touch with Lugovoy, and Lugovoy had visited with Badri, leaving traces of polonium behind, during his fateful trip to London in October 2006, when he met with Litvinenko and allegedly poisoned him.

The assassination of Litvinenko and now Patarkatsishvili's death represent only the tip of an iceberg of intrigues being conducted on British soil. Britain has become a preferred haven for political exiles, oligarchs, and other refugees from the Soviet Union. One can only wonder how long the British people, having imported more than enough trouble from the Islamic world and straitjacketed now by restrictions on free speech that appear to be the inevitable results of "diversity," will stand for this. London is now Londonistan or Moscow-on-the-Thames, and Merry Old England is quickly becoming a distant memory.

— Wayne Allensworth

OBITER DICTA

Mark your calendar now for the 19th Annual Meeting of the **John Randolph Club**, "A Republic, If You Can Keep It," September 12-13, 2008. For the first time, the meeting will be held in Philadelphia, at the Sofitel Philadelphia, *TripAdvisor.com*'s top-rated Philly hotel. On September 11-12, we will hold a special historical program featuring a dinner banquet and a lunch, as well as lectures and walking tours to explore Philadelphia's contribution to the Revolution and the Founding. Watch future issues of *Chronicles* or visit *www.ChroniclesMagazine.org* for more details.

Summer School 2008 update: The early-bird rates for The Rockford Institute's next Summer School, "The Crusades" (see the ad on the back cover), expire on April 15. If you are planning to attend, please do not delay registering. The level of registrations thus far suggests that this Summer School will sell out.

Making his debut in the pages of *Chronicles* is this month's poet, **Larry Johnson**. Dr. Johnson is a native of Mississippi. His book *Veins: Poems 1966-2006* will be published in 2009 by WordTech Editions. He lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, and teaches at Louisburg College. He has published in *Iowa Review* and *New Orleans Review*.

Our cover art is provided by our executive editor, **Scott P. Richert**.

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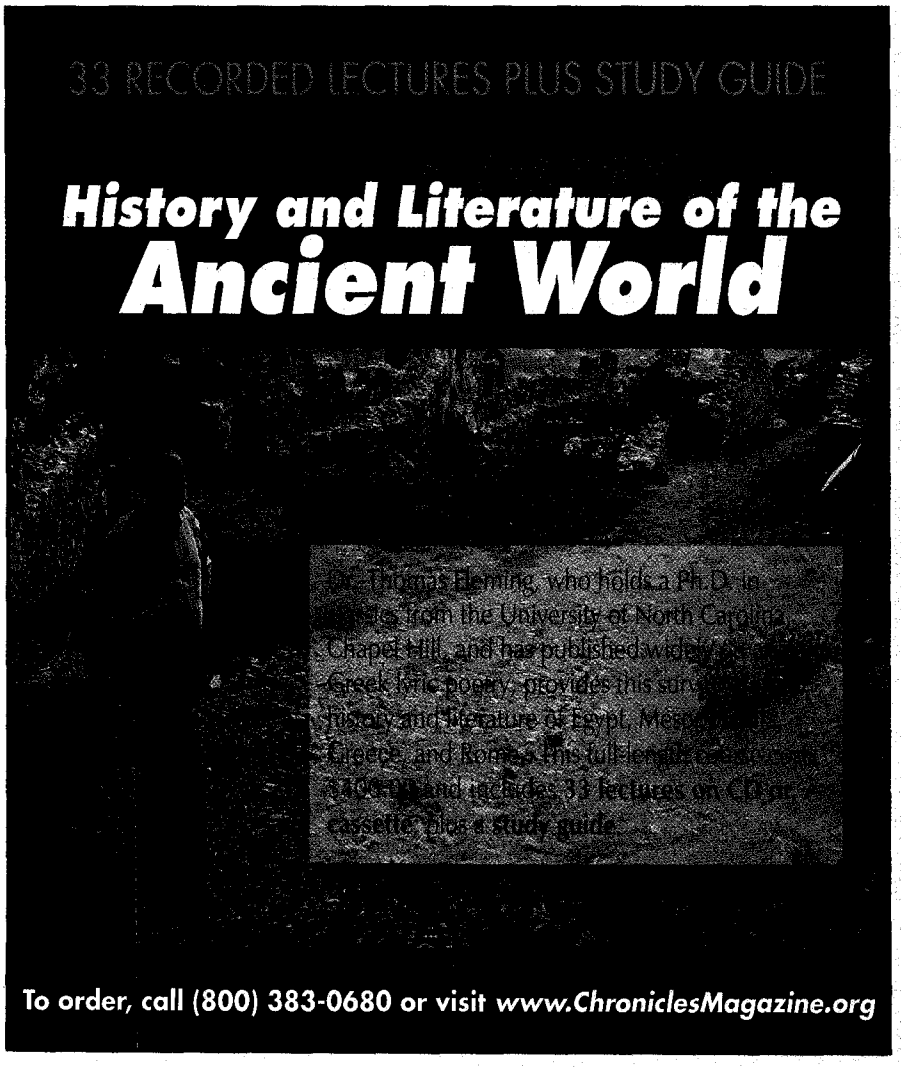
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by Thomas Fleming

Little Aristocracies of Our Own

How beastly the bourgeois is,
Especially the male of the species

D.H. Lawrence's lines are still quoted, though most often by writers who know nothing else of his poetry. It is taken for granted that Lawrence was right to contemn the "middle-class values" of the whited sepulchers who pretend to virtues and tastes they do not possess. The male bourgeois may be good to look at, but

Let him meet a new emotion, let him be faced with another man's need,
let him come home to a bit of moral difficulty, let life face him with a new demand on his understanding
and then watch him go soggy, like a wet meringue.
Watch him turn into a mess, either a fool or a bully.

It is perhaps not unfair to Lawrence to wonder if, by "new emotion," he meant something like the desire to seduce another man's wife, or if, by "a new demand on his understanding," he intended to convey something like a revolution in which people like Lawrence (who had sympathy for "another man's need") displaced the well-dressed games-playing sons of bankers and brewers.

Lawrence seems to have had a horror of ordinary good looks and decent conventional grooming:

Nicely groomed, like a mushroom
standing there so sleek and erect and eyeable—
and like a fungus, living on the remains of bygone life
sucking his life out of the dead leaves of greater life than his own.

The fungus living on a greater life than its own (if I may compress his imagery) is the ordinary man who has been taught to admire Vergil and Handel but cannot, perhaps, just bring himself to throw his wealth and women at the feet of Stravinsky and Lawrence.

Whatever else he was, Lawrence was no Marxist, but something more like an aristocracy of one. Any revolution he took part in would be for his entirely personal gratification. As he advised in "A Sane Revolution,"

If you make a revolution, make it for fun . . .

Don't do it because you hate people
do it just to spit in their eye. . . .

Don't do it for equality,
do it because we've got too much equality
and it would be fun to upset the apple-cart
and see which way the apples would go a-rolling.

Don't do it for the working classes.
Do it so that we can all of us be little aristocracies of our own . . .

Nonetheless, I find it hard not to see in his critique of the bourgeoisie the great platitude of modern proletarianism. The bourgeoisie, however superficially attractive, is uncreative and conventional, while really interesting people make the world up as they go along, as if there were a new creation every sunrise. The male is particularly despicable because—well, to tell the truth, it is because he has his pick of the bourgeois females, who, whatever their mental and moral limitations, are still infinitely desirable to someone proud to be a coal miner's son.

The aristocracy was a different case. By Lawrence's day, the House of Lords was a museum for English eccentrics who had long since surrendered power to wealthy members of the higher bourgeoisie. Besides, decadent aristocrats fornicate like cats and have as little thought for next week as a day laborer. You cannot pick up a London newspaper without reading about the death of a noble duke or earl, whose arrests for drug possession, shoplifting, and child molestation are described in politely vague allusions to a "troubled life." It is a matter of time preference, as Edward Banfield argued in *The Unheavenly City*. While dukes, like day laborers, tend to think only of today's pleasures and miseries, members of the middling class, as they proceed up the socioeconomic ladder, think in increasingly long terms—a monthly paycheck, an annual salary, the grandchildren's tuition.

Hatred of the beastly bourgeois was not restricted to proletarian revolutionaries. T.S. Eliot, a respectable bourgeois himself despite his little rebellions, more than once expressed impatience with the dull and pointless world of the pleasant English suburbs.

Here were decent godless people:

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Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls.

This contempt for the suburban middle classes was only one of the things that so irritated C.S. Lewis about Eliot. Like most Americans, Eliot wanted the English to be more English than they are, and his exasperation with the hollowness of middle-class nicety reminds me a bit of Irish-American tourists who come away from a trip to Ireland disappointed with an almost entirely bourgeois society in which no Victor McLaglen is racing John Wayne down the beach to win the widow's favor, as Maureen O'Hara, forever young and beautiful, looks on.

Let us concede Lawrence's basic point: The male American bourgeois is hard to like and impossible to love. He lacks courage, fire, imagination. Despite the ten-thousand novels written to show the businessman's heroism in going to work every day to make more money and staying married to a nagging and pretentious wife who thinks herself too good for him, we prefer to read about Mafia hit men who cheat on their wives, betray their allies, and murder their friends. At the end of Booth Tarkington's wonderful novel *The Turmoil*, we are supposed to be happy when the poetic dreamer Bibbs Sheridan decides to follow in Old Sheridan's footsteps and become a captain of industry, but we know that he has lost something.

Few of us are born to be poets, and that few probably did not include Bibbs Sheridan, who, in accepting bourgeois responsibilities, becomes a better man, better than the poet *manqué* he had been and better than his brother and sister who, after one generation of wealth, have been corrupted. To the extent there is a bourgeoisie in America, it is the class that defines our character and our virtues. We are not an imaginative or bold people, but a race of imitators and conformists. For good and ill, we have had to wait for fashions to change in Europe before we were willing to become Marxists or reactionaries, and when we did blaze political artistic trails, they led only to the junk heap destined for Jackson Pollock's paintings and John Cage's scores.

Since the closing of the frontier, we have displayed the spirit of enterprise only in business, and even in business, the men who make the greatest fortunes are those who have learned to manipulate government on their behalf. Armand Hammer and Ross Perot are the names that come immediately to mind, but if you look deeply enough, America's recent great fortunes are founded not so much on crime as on a government contract or legal loophole.

The bourgeoisie is or was a type of middle class, but while middle classes are defined in socioeconomic terms—so much money, membership in this but not that club, graduation from Ohio U but not Yale or Wright State—the bourgeoisie was defined by its virtues. Honesty in business, diligence, self-discipline, and self-reliance are the most obvious qualities, but an upper bourgeoisie also borrowed and preserved many of the traditions and interests of the aristocracy—classical education, literature and art, and good manners. A bourgeois banker may not have actually enjoyed the concerts to which he was dragged by his wife, but he had a part to play in society—a part that earned him sneering contempt from the classes above and below him. When one of our presidential candidates says she is *from* the middle class and *for* the middle class, she is at least half-right, but apart from the total banality of her mind, there is nothing bourgeois about Hillary Clinton.

Hardly anyone has commented on the strange fact that Mrs. Clinton has wrapped herself in the mantle of the middle class in order to appeal to blue-collar voters, who, by any serious definition, do not belong to the middle class. Her rhetoric does not seem strange, because, in America, we are all middle class, from the shift worker laid off at Chrysler to the executive who shipped his job to China. We do speak of Bill Gates and Warren Buffett as rich or even superrich, but no one could possibly accuse them of being aristocrats. Indeed, no one could accuse either of being bourgeois. They lack the cultivation and sense of decency that one could still observe in many of the Midwest's third-generation industrialists. George Babbitt's wealthier friends listened to Beethoven and César Franck on the phonograph; the Dodsworths rattled around Europe, picking up culture, until they were no longer at home in Zenith City. Mr. Gates could buy the Metropolitan Opera lock, stock, and barrel, but no one could dream of him liking *Così Fan Tutte*. I suspect the only opera in which Mr. Gates takes an interest is the Opera web browser.

To understand what a bourgeoisie is (or has been) and of what use it might be again in American life, we need to know a little etymology and a little history. *Bourgeois* is the French equivalent of the German *Bürger*, a corporate member of a city. In the medieval world, a city was not an accidental collection of people making money off one another. It was a corporation with rights and duties stipulated in a charter granted by the emperor or king. A burgh was surrounded by walls, defended by a militia, and governed by legal and political institutions managed by leading members of the corporation. Not everyone who lived in a city belonged to the corporation—far from it. In Florence, the city-corporation or commune was at first the creature of the wealthier guilds, and, although it later permitted the lesser guilds to participate, Florence was owned by its leading men and operated by the more important guilds.

The older English word for *bourgeois* was *citizen*, a word that still retained its meaning in Shakespeare's day, when flower sellers, petty tavern keepers, and pickpockets did not count as citizens. In 11th- and 12th-century England, Londoners counted as aristocrats, because the citizens fielded a formidable army that had more than once defended its walls against royal forces. This conception of citizens as corporate members in a commonwealth lies behind our republican view of the active and responsible citizen who has a stake in society. Although the significance of citizenship was already in steep decline in the 18th century, English and American Whigs, nonetheless, viewed possession

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of property and a capacity for public service as part of the bundle of qualities that made up a citizen.

The nations of Europe and northern North America became, in the 19th century, preeminently bourgeois. The great industrialists, merchants, and bankers were so obviously the ruling class that, during the socialist phase of the revolutionary movement that destroyed Christendom, the bourgeoisie replaced crown, Church, and aristocracy as the principal target. Even today, bourgeois attitudes and "values" can be used as a metaphor for everything that has to be eliminated from modern life on the way to the earthly paradise. The normal family is stigmatized by its enemies and praised by its misguided defenders as "bourgeois," and the moral principles that undergird the family—chastity and fidelity—are hopelessly bourgeois. While all forms of folk music, no matter how primitive, bogus, or obscene, are worthy of study and praise, a lingering affection for Haydn or Donizetti or even Richard Rodgers is bourgeois. Only the avant-garde is exempt, along with music so early or exotic that no one enjoys it.

Nothing, in fact, can be more reactionary, more bourgeois, than careful and effective speech, which is why today's university teachers interweave platitudes and interjections together with academic jargon into something that sounds like Tommy Chong getting high on a sociology Ph.D. D.H. Lawrence, God rest his tortured soul, would be appalled.

The bourgeois, being neither aggressive nor creative, were too occupied with getting and spending to maintain themselves for long against their Marxist enemies, and beginning in the late 19th century (at least), bourgeois children were being coopted by the enemies of their class. I do not know at what point the struggle was lost, but it was sometime between the publication of such books as *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1919) and the spate of such big-selling antibourgeois novels as *Babbitt* (1922). World War I is, perhaps, the most reasonable dividing line between the world that formed Booth Tarkington and the world of Sinclair Lewis.

The revolt against the bourgeoisie was stalled by depression and war, though it reemerged among Beat writers of the 1950's. But Jack Kerouac and Paul Goodman (unlike Allen Ginsberg) were too intelligent and too honest to be the leaders of anything in a culture that rejected all standards, and the antibourgeois revolution was taken over by illiterate college students in the 1960's. With a few exceptions, the student protestors tended to be the offspring and grandchildren of working-class immigrants, and, in a social world dominated by country-club liberals and country-club Republicans, they naturally felt themselves outsiders. No matter how successful a Jewish or Irish businessman might be, he still found bourgeois civility an ordeal, and his unwashed children—kids such as Tom Hayden, Jerry Rubin, Mark Rudd, David Horowitz—led a feeble uprising against all things traditional, orderly, disciplined, moral, clean, and wholesome. Some of them may have changed—or pretended to change—their ideology, but they have never wavered in their hostility to civility.

Silly and feeble as their protests were, the kids won by default, simply by riding a wave that had been churned up many centuries ago by moral and political revolutionaries from Montaigne to Marx. The idea that losers such as Jerry Rubin or Mark Rudd could lead a parade, much less a revolution, is something invented by the editors of *Commentary* and the *Nation* on a slow news—or, rather, slow lies—day.

Sad to say, children of WASP bourgeois families were content to follow the trends and join the revolution. When had the young bourgeois been anything but conventional? It was apparent at the time that the revolution was winning, as soon as kids (the word is used advisedly) from decent families quit bathing or cutting their hair and took to wearing blue jeans, the uniform of the proletarian mass-man. It is ironic (which, in American, refers to any B that can be logically deduced from A) that the rough clothes of men who work with their hands has become *de rigeur* for people who will never do a day's work. But middle-class Americans who adopt their denim habit are right: For all their money or degrees, they are just as much proletarian mass-men as any dues-paying member of the AFL.

The stupidity of those days (which are also these days) must have been exasperating to any serious revolutionary, and the "protest kids" inspired contempt among radicals as diverse as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Jean-Luc Godard, themselves afflicted with bourgeois values such as regard for courage, intelligence, mental coherence, and clarity of expression. In America, English has been a dead language for several decades. Nothing, in fact, can be more reactionary, more bourgeois, than careful and effective speech, which is why today's university teachers interweave platitudes and interjections together with academic jargon into something that sounds like Tommy Chong getting high on a sociology Ph.D. D.H. Lawrence, God rest his tortured soul, would be appalled.

The old bourgeoisie is as dead as the old aristocracy: The two classes, at least in America, have merged into a single fossil type. But the principles on which it is based are enduring: a responsible patriotism that stems from a proprietary sense of being part of a society, integrity in business and public life, self-control, a decent regard for other people, a willing acceptance of social conventions, and a healthy respect for the little hypocrisies that permit us to get through the day without insulting, beating, or killing one another. It is not, from the perspective of either Saint Francis or D.H. Lawrence, a very lofty code, but it is the best we have here in America. You say you want a counterrevolution? Put on a tie, get a haircut, throw away your blue jeans, and try, for Heaven's sake, to learn English. ◁

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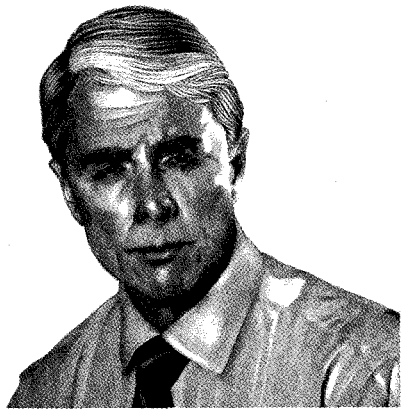
by Roger D. McGrath

Payback for Pearl Harbor



I was recently visiting with an old Marine Corps buddy, Ralph Willis, at his home on California's central coast. At 86, he is one of the fortunate few who are still alive to describe their experiences fighting the Japanese in the Pacific during World War II. Ralph put down some of his memories in *My Life as a Jarhead*, which caused a local newspaper to send a young reporter to interview him. She told Ralph that she was eager to hear about his experiences. Not knowing how much background material the young reporter might need, Ralph asked her if she was well versed in the various Pacific campaigns. Well, no, she answered, but she had seen Clint Eastwood's two movies about Iwo Jima.

The realization that those two deeply flawed films were the extent of the reporter's knowledge of the war in the Pacific made Ralph shudder. Names such as Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, and Okinawa meant nothing to her. How different it was a couple of generations ago, when those battles were household names in America. Now, they are not even recognized by college graduates.

Although most college students today know something about the Japanese sneak attack that got us into the war, few can identify the battle that was "payback" for Pearl Harbor. It took place at Truk Atoll, whose beautiful, deep-water lagoon provided Japan with her greatest fleet anchorage in the Pacific. Along with the rest of the Caroline Islands, Truk had been mandated by the Treaty of Versailles to Japan following World War I. In violation of the treaty, Japan soon closed the Carolines to the outside world and began fortifying key islands, especially the six principal islands of Truk Atoll. By the time Japan was finished, Truk had become the "Gibraltar of the Pacific." The heart of Truk's lagoon lay 30 miles inside a great barrier reef; any attacking force would have to come by air. To protect against such an assault, the Japanese had four airstrips operational and some 365 planes at the ready.

Task Force 58, commanded by Adm. Marc Mitscher, included five fleet carriers—*Enterprise*, *Yorktown*, *Essex*, *Intrepid*, and *Bunker Hill*—and four light carriers. There were also enough battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines to push the total of ships involved to more than 60. Aptly code-named Operation Hailstone, the attack on Truk was launched before dawn on February 17, 1944. As the first rays of the rising sun reached Truk, 72 Hellcats, led by Lt. Cmdr. William "Killer" Kane, swept down on the islands. Japanese planes that got off the ground were blown out of the sky by the twos and threes. Kane and his wingman shot down five Zeros in five minutes before turning their attention to strafing planes on the ground.

"Jap airplanes were burning and falling from every quarter," said Lt. Cmdr. Ed Owen, "and many were crashing on takeoff as a result of strafing them on the ground. Ground installations were exploding and burning, and all this in the early golden glow of dawn. At times it might have been staged for the movies."

Watching the raid from the ground was Maj. Gregory "Pappy" Boyington. The leading Marine ace had been shot down and captured six weeks earlier while raiding Rabaul. Since he was a special prize, he was being transported to Honshu for interrogation and torture. At the exact moment that the plane carrying Boyington touched down to refuel, Kane and his Hellcat pilots began their attack. Boyington was hustled off the plane. The first thing he saw was a Hellcat, only a few dozen feet above the ground, screaming over the airfield, and "spraying .50-calibers all through the Nip aircraft standing there in front of us."

Wave after wave of American planes continued to strike Truk throughout the day. The new Hellcats, which had replaced the older and slower Wildcats, and the American pilots proved more than a match for the vaunted Zeros and the Japanese pilots. Lt.(jg) Alex Vraciu, who had been Butch O'Hare's wingman, shot down four Japanese planes. Lt. Robert Duncan, who had a baby back home in Illinois he had not yet seen, also got four. Lt. Hamilton McWhorter, the first Hellcat ace, Lt.(jg) Tom McCelland, Lt.(jg) Eugene Valencia, and Lt. Armistead Smith got three each. By the end of the day, U.S. Navy pilots had shot 124 enemy planes out of the sky and destroyed that many again on the ground.

During the night, Mitscher sent specially equipped Avengers to pound Truk. At the same time, eight of Mitscher's warships circled the atoll to intercept Japanese ships attempting to escape the carnage in the lagoon. With the next morning came more American fighter and bomber sweeps. By noon, there were few targets left to hit. Sitting on the bottom of the lagoon were 13 Japanese warships and 32 merchant ships. Another two warships were on the ocean floor just outside the entrance to the lagoon. Some 275 Japanese planes had been destroyed. Thousands of Japanese had been killed. The United States suffered the loss of only 40 men and 25 planes.

The raid rendered the Gibraltar of the Pacific impotent, allowing U.S. forces to bypass the once putatively impregnable base on the way to Tokyo. As Hellcat pilot Ed Owen later said, "Up 'til that time the Truk raid was 'the greatest show in town,' and I wouldn't have missed it for anything." ◈

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The End of the American Middle Class

The Lonely New Age

by John Lukacs

We have now entered a new age which will not have a name or a designation until, I think, at least one or two centuries from now: But then, such is the evolution of historical terminology. Yet we should be able to recognize at least some of its apparent characteristics. One (to my old-fashioned mind, the most repulsive and dangerous) of these characteristics is the oceanic flood of what is abstract, rather than natural or real, over- and underwhelming the thinking of people: the flood of images not merely being components of realities but accepted as if they were realities themselves. There are innumerable examples of this tendency. One example: What are "possessions" now? What are "assets"? The President has acclaimed the presence and the ideal of an "ownership society," when, in reality, the vast majority who inhabit houses are not true owners but debtors: that is, renters. We are in the presence of an inflation of language, when terms and words not only cease to mean what they meant not so long ago but their usage has become inaccurate if not meaningless.

The definitions of social classes have often been somewhat imprecise, but not meaningless. Some of their unavoidable imprecisions: An "upper class" has not been necessarily a "ruling class"; "aristocracy" has not been necessarily the same as a "nobility." About 30 years ago, I wrote, on occasion, of the then-imprecise confusing of "middle class" with "bourgeois":

> In the 1920s Charles A. Beard, one of the most original and independent historians of the United States, wrote that the United States had only one class, "the petty bourgeoisie. . . . The American ideal most widely expressed is the *embourgeoisement* of the whole society—a universality of comfort, convenience, security, leisure, standard possessions of food, clothing, and shelter." Yet standard possessions of food, clothing, and shelter are middle-class aspirations, not bourgeois ones. Beard's equation of bourgeois and middle-class was wrong. Every society (even some animal populations) has a more-or-less recognizable segment, situated in the middle, between its upper and lower classes. But not every society had, or has, a bourgeoisie. The bourgeois has been a particular phenomenon, a historical reality. Edmund Wilson, a very different man than Beard, was wrong too. In 1932 he wrote that "the writer who has made me feel most overwhelmingly that bourgeois society was ripe for burial . . . was Proust": but Proust wrote mostly not about the bourgeois but about a Partisan upper-class, including aristocrats.

There *was* a bourgeois and an urban—and, here and there, urbane—era in the history of the United States, too, from about 1880 to 1950. This is a very large country, and there were vast exceptions, portions untouched by that, but so it was. America and Europe (including England) grew closer. America entered two world wars to help Britain and Western Europe endure. After 1880, American cities grew larger than London, Paris, Berlin. The New World was no longer the antithesis of the Old. It became the repository of its civilization, culture, arts. It was spared the catastrophes that befell Europe in the two world wars. Its institutions represented many of the standards of a constitutional and liberal order. But my main argument now is not the dissolution of what was once bourgeois in America. It is the disappearance of the American middle class, as such.

Middle class must mean something in the middle between upper and lower. Yet an American upper class no longer exists. There was such a class in the past: Its power and its ambitions were limited, but its social prestige was extant and attractive. But the convictions of its members were lamentably superficial, and their self-confidence, regrettably weak. During the 1960's, this class dissolved and disappeared. There are still many rich people in America: But whereas the "new rich" in the past were marginal, newcomers to an upper class still then existing, just about all of the American rich now are new-new rich, with standards and possessions that are ephemeral. By 1960, Celebrity had wholly replaced "Society"; and publicity absorbed, and replaced, privacy. The middle-class habits (and virtues) of permanence, of saving, of passing their assets—and values—on to their children disappeared. As did the once, often rightly excoriated, bourgeois habit of hypocrisy—doing and saying the right thing for the wrong reason; or, the tribute vice is paying to virtue. But this, too, is no longer extant among people whose ideas of right and wrong are formed by publicity, and where indeed virtue often feels compelled to pay tribute to vice.

John Lukacs is an historian and author, most recently, of George Kennan: A Study of Character *(Yale University Press).*

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So did the recognizable cultural and civilizational distinction between upper-middle and lower-middle classes (the first bourgeois and sometimes even patrician) disappear.

Since the 1960's, the United States was becoming, by and large, a classless society. Of course, there were, and are, many poor people. (Has not Jesus said that "the poor you will always have with you"?) But, like *upper* and *middle*, *working class*, too, has lost much of its meaning when there is no upper class left, and when the poorest among us are not habitual workers.

It may be significant that the now colloquial (and sloppy) use of *class* as an adjective has become current at the same time of the disappearance of *class* as a concrete noun (as has the usage of the stupid stumbling new adjectives *upscale* and *tony*). Here is a telling example: In 2004, former President George H.W. Bush (who had translated himself and his family from Connecticut to Texas) exhorted the U.S. Olympic team in Athens to behave "with class." *With class!* And this by someone whom many Americans still describe—wrongly—as an aristocrat. This is the same man who habitually speaks of his grandchildren as "grandkids." No gentleman would have ever used such a word.

We now live in a largely classless society. The conditions and the consequences of this are unforeseeable. (Not unforeseeable is the eventual emergence of a new kind of ruling class—but who, and how, and when, no one can tell.) Hundreds of millions of isolated individuals, men, women, couples unsure of where they belong or should belong, unaware of their neighbors and of the community where they temporarily reside. These conditions of lonesomeness and impermanence include a breakdown of real communications between people who are otherwise told that they live amid the marvels of the Information Age.

This has, and will have, enormous consequences not only in the arts and in literature but in the very assets of people, including their families and homes. *Family*, *house*, *home*—the meaning of each of these words has been leached out from the minds of so many people. More than 200 years ago, Samuel Johnson was—and remains, as almost always—right: "To be happy at home is the end of all human endeavor." (Dr. Johnson, too, regretted the lives of people who are "afraid to go home and think.") To be happy away from home is now the aim of much American endeavor—surely of the young and, alas, of so many adults, too. A centripetal tendency—and part and parcel of the disappearance of a once estimable and recognizable middle class. ©

Last Days of Juvenal

by Larry Johnson

With Hadrian supreme he grows a beard at last—
No more the barber's stinging lotion reeks,
No more blood-strawberries fatten on his cheeks
To require daubing with an itchy plast.
O, freedom of respect for his whitegray nap,
Face's rugosity hidden safely beneath
(Although it's true this curling, mossy sheath
Makes him look Greek, or worse, an oiled satrap
From Parthian stews). But comfort in his age
Outranks what deference his patrons show,
Whether more or less: he will no longer rage
At Rome as on some cracked column a crow
Might squawk hoarsely at depilated whores
Drifting, like him, toward Caesar's gilded doors.

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Nostalgia Ain't What It Used To Be

Arriving at Indistinction

by James O. Tate

I cannot remember the occasion, but I will not forget the voice—female, authoritative, and poised—that intoned a dismissal of the so-called yuppies as follows: "They oversee the distribution of toilet paper!" I was a bit thrilled by the superior attitude, being even then no young upwardly mobile professional myself. I thought about the matter and concluded that I was a downwardly undulant mobile professional, or "dumpy," and there the matter rested, until I gave some consideration to David Brooks's "bobos," or "bourgeois bohemians," and thought that he had a point about a transmogrification that was an historic shift.

He had quite a point indeed, but somehow, the absurdity of contemporary life was missing, or it was underdramatized in his account. I find it still shocking, even today, to apprehend the amount of gross self-contradiction that we routinely experience. Walking into an ordinary restaurant, I beheld a room of gray-haired adults who were all dressed as chubby five-year-olds, in T-shirts, shorts, and sneakers; I thought for a moment someone must have slipped me something psychedelic, or that I had perhaps wandered, in some fit of absentmindedness, into a home for the mentally challenged. When we are seated in such a place, therefore, I always make sure that the rock music is playing at full volume, or otherwise I can't relax. I might have some sort of episode if I can't balance one discourse ("I just can't understand all the hostility to Senator Clinton!") with another pertinent latest hit ("Whooo! Brown sugar—how come you taste so good?!"). And could I see that choice of vegetables again?

As we languish in our postmodern state and look back at the 20th century, we may note not only some social and economic changes, but changes in the representation of those realities. The middle class has detached itself from the industrial dispensation and from the values that had been understood to underlie modern civilization—and it is more graphic or at least more inherently interesting to track the process through literature than it is through the dismal sciences. In the case of literature, of course, there is always a question about the degree of alienation involved—is the angle of vision from within or without the situation depicted? Novels that have claimed a degree of realism and recorded the decline of the middle class have suggested a more radical vision than has ordinarily been assumed by the middle-class readers for whom they were written. If nostalgia is now unwarranted, then it never was, and the novels say as much.

One novelist who comes first to mind is Booth Tarkington (1869-1946), a professional, a chronicler of Indianapolis and Indiana and the middle-class family. The author of *The Gentleman From Indiana* was one such, and that stance centered him, propelled him, and limited him as well. His reputation has not been treated kindly, but he was a considerable writer who deserves more reconsideration than I can afford him here.

Tarkington's aesthetic was that of Howells' genteel realism, and his temperament was essentially liberal, humorous, and optimistic. He showed the rise and fall of families and businesses in *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1918), *The Turmoil* (1915), and *The Midlands* (1924). Tarkington rendered the dynamics of capitalism and the social change in the transition from horse to horsepower, the social consequences of industrial capitalism as it impacted on class and manners. But his best novel is probably *Alice Adams* (1921), because of his ironic rather than progressive view of a young woman's adjustment to straitened circumstances and limited opportunities. In these works, one can learn much through the particular focus on the Midwest of the felt experience of the nation a century ago.

We can hardly be blamed for remembering something of *The Magnificent Ambersons* through the distorting and brilliant lens of Orson Welles' mutilated film, perhaps his greatest even in its condition. Neither can we be blamed for remembering Tarkington through the filter of his indulgent Penrod books, not so much for their stereotyped characters as for the outrageous pastiche rendered in Penrod's sensational melodrama about Harold Ramorez, the road agent. Strangely enough, the wildest flights of fancy Tarkington ever inscribed were over-the-top burlesques of his own childhood scribblings—a version, perhaps, of what Dickens did with his Mr. Dick. But we would be less likely to remember that Tarkington went through a painful divorce, a battle with alcoholism, and the death of a child. And less likely to remember that, in a fantasy of 1926, "The Veiled Feminists of Atlantis," Tarkington offered a war between the sexes occasioned by woman's insistence on superiority, as opposed to equality. At the end, all perish in an apocalyptic inundation.

Fewer still recall that Tarkington once actually refused to receive Sinclair Lewis.

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

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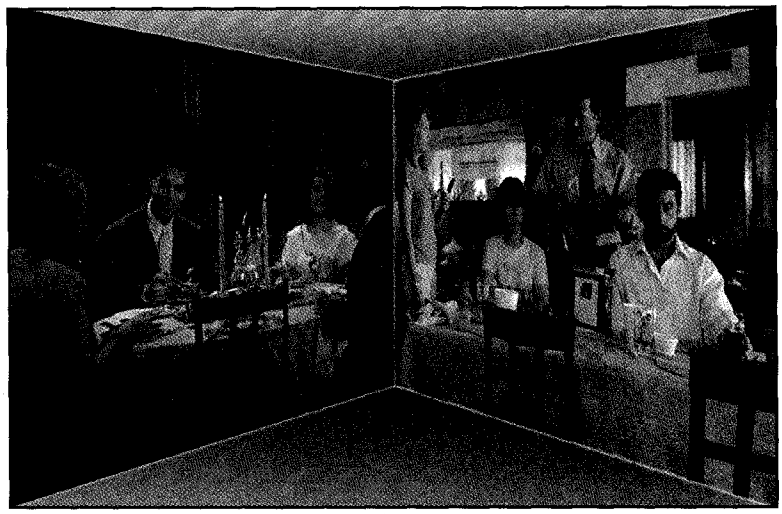
This last is a significant moment in American literary history, to my mind. Tarkington's social rejection of Lewis was a cultural statement, for how could he have failed to sense that the object of Lewis's satire or derision was the people he had lived among and limned? Tarkington's rejection of an alien attitude was for him a recognition of what was to him the unacceptable—a line had been crossed. The gentleman from Indiana, or of Victorian rectitude, was not about to chat chummily with a man of opposing values. On the other hand, Tarkington was the author of *The World Does Move* (1928), and he knew the truth of the thought. He was an optimist but ambivalent about the "creative destruction" of capitalism and progress.

The Sinclair Lewis who gave us "Babbittry" in 1922 was the future knocking on the door, a door flung wide-open by the Swedish Academy in 1930, when he was awarded the first Nobel Prize in Literature offered to an American. I think it is fair to say that Lewis never recovered. Looking back at a long list of bad books, I do believe today that *The Man Who Knew Coolidge: Being the Soul of Lowell Schmaltz, Constructive and Nordic Citizen* (1928) is a work that, in its corrosive ventriloquism, is alive today. But in spite of his range as an author, particularly in generating sympathy for George Babbitt, Lewis the man did not have Tarkington's balance of character. The point is that in and through Babbitt and Schmaltz, Sinclair Lewis incorporated his own limitations in bitter satire that co-opted modernist attitudes and repackaged them for the reading public that was, after all, the same middle class that was being subjected to attack.

John P. Marquand (1893-1960), an admirer of Sinclair Lewis, had a broad reach as a commercial novelist, but was at heart a satirist of the proper Bostonians of the upper-middle class. *The Late George Apley* (1937) has its parodic aspects, as does *H.M. Pulham, Esquire* (1941). Marquand was not merely a social historian but a writer with range and wit. The unreliable narrator of *Melville Goodwin, USA* (1951) shades that discourse into the Jamesian realm. *Sincerely, Willis Wayde* (1955) is a novel that Dickens and Thackeray would have appreciated for its attack on the bitch-goddess success, on the emptiness of material achievement, and on Wayde's ruthless rise from the lower to the upper-middle class. Marquand was no prisoner of the values that he knew; it hardly seems justifiable, though it does seem predictable, that he is so neglected today.

John O'Hara (1905-70) had a chip on his shoulder about his Irishness that today seems quaint, but it gave him an edge. He both saw through the image of "making it" and was fired up to do that very thing. His oblique view of society served him well but not fully—he wrote about "society" when the intelligentsia had dismissed the agonies of country-club snobbery, and his punishment was to be underrated. He was as sensitive to cruelty and waste as F. Scott Fitzgerald, though he lacked the poetic gift and lift of the latter. Even so, the language he wrote in *Pal Joey* (1940) suggests that a revaluation is in order. Besides that, *Ten North Frederick* (1955) suggests the emptiness of Vanity Fair as decisively as a 19th-century novelist would have done. Never respected by the bohemian crowd, O'Hara was a more dialectical and shrewd writer than he has been given credit for. His parroting of the materialism he analyzed, right down to the Rolls-Royce, showed that he lived what he knew; his books, the *vice versa*.



Melanie Anderson

Yes, but these writers of the middle class for the middle class about the middle class were not, though they had their moments, visionaries or artists or aliens creating a new language. They were not Gertrude Stein or James Joyce or modernists and experimenters who took us to another level of reality. And they have paid the price for their limited sense of reality. The story of the century is today not the story of the discrediting of the middle class but its disassembly or division into warring parts. The culture that Babbitt scorned and yearned for has come back to bite him in the form of a multiple cultural revolution that has masked an economic or social one, for the image of the middle class presumes the primacy of the family.

Is there any aspect of the family that has not been subverted, inverted, or perverted, or any distortion that has not been reinforced by cultural leverage? The family is the enemy of freedom and individuality and sexual fulfillment. The generation gap, the war between the sexes, feminism—every centrifugal vector has been magnified by propaganda called art, so that, finally, art is propaganda and is sanctioned by the academic clerisy for that very reason. "Subversive" and "subversion" have been terms of praise in our universities for decades. The co-optation by government and big business of "subversive elements" is more than a sure sign of the cultural war in which we live—it is the war itself. And that war is expressed in all the arts as well as in government policies, community projects, church agendas, and so on.

The fiction of the 20th century that survives or is affirmed today is certainly more radical (in the obvious sense) than anything written by middlebrow authors such as Tarkington, Lewis, Marquand, and O'Hara. Even so, in

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popular fiction, Edna Ferber's *Giant* is nothing if not subversive of the family it presents and represents, with the obvious targets of patriarchy, racial hierarchy, sex, "orientation," and so on. If we think of the heavy-handed messages as a reversal of American history and as a prototype of government policies today, then we see where we are, or rather, where we have been and already were five decades ago, and where we are going, or rather, once again, where we already are.

Is there any aspect of the family that has not been subverted, inverted, or perverted, or any distortion that has not been reinforced by cultural leverage? The family is the enemy of freedom and individuality and sexual fulfillment. The generation gap, the war between the sexes, feminism—every centrifugal vector has been magnified by propaganda called art, so that, finally, art is propaganda and is sanctioned by the academic clerisy for that very reason. "Subversive" and "subversion" have been terms of praise in our universities for decades. The co-optation by government and big business of "subversive elements" is more than a sure sign of the cultural war in which we live—it is the war itself.

The most remembered of modern American writers, Fitzgerald and Hemingway, are hardly to be seen as writers of the middle class, in spite of their backgrounds. If Gatsby is great, it is not as a patriarch that he is so, and Jake Barnes is an impotent priest of a private religion that is explicitly anti-American and antibourgeois. Raymond Chandler was called "petit bourgeois" by Billy Wilder, who ought to have known. But that quality does not register in his books, in which the middle class hardly exists. But an attitude does, one that is not friendly to the American middle class and its shaky construction. In the Los Angeles of 1949, the writing is already on the wall, as inscribed by the man whom Evelyn Waugh claimed was the best novelist in America:

> The luxury trades, the pansy decorators, the Lesbian dress designers, the riffraff of a big hard-boiled city with no more personality than a paper cup. Out in the fancy suburbs dear old Dad is reading the sports page in front of a picture window, with his shoes off, thinking he is high class because he has a three-car garage. Mom is in front of her princess dresser trying to paint the suitcases out from under her eyes. And Junior is clamped onto the telephone calling up a succession of high school girls that talk pigeon English and carry contraceptives in their make-up kit.

In that same year, that most individual of writers, the confirmed antibourgeois Wyndham Lewis (no American, he) was writing his third autobiography, *Rude Assignment*, and remembering the 1920's and the changes after World War I. He saw the revolution under way from its inception:

> The discrediting and dethroning of this feeblest and smallest of sovereigns, the little father of the family, in his squalid domestic "castle," is one of the main features of the demasculinizing process. Many of the specifically masculine attributes would disappear at the same time as the loss of status.
>
> Such is the political aspect of the transaction. But Big Business, as well as the politician, has for many years had the male principle under observation; both have their plans for its elimination. To think of the housewife, for instance, puts the modern economic planner in a rage. . . . The abolition of the Family as we have known it up to now is more than ever on the agenda of those who have the power to change what they want to change. It is not an idle or ill-founded prophecy to say that a third sex will ultimately emerge.

Lewis claimed that he approved of 20th-century developments for a particular reason: He thought the flattening out of all distinctions would put an end to war. He may have been wrong about that last part.

He was not wrong, though, about the systematic disassembly of the middle class and its replacement by a new order, including a new sexual order. We see that all about us. The will, the values, even the faith that has sustained and ordered what we have known of civilization in the era of the Protestant ethic has come to an end. The polymorphous dispensation has arrived, and we know it when men dress as children, and women dress as men. We know it when we reach for a familiar object with a familiar brand but find upon inspection of the small print that it is "made in China."

Oh well, another job gone, and that is fine with the politicians and the corporations and the talking heads, David Brooks and the rest of them, who rationalize it all. What's the problem? There's plenty of paper money, at least for a while, though the Chinese seem to have an awful lot of that paper money. Maybe we should print some more paper money and adjust the interest rates! Meanwhile, there is always culture. There are so many channels on the satellite TV that we can adjust to every need. *Masterpiece Theatre* eliminates the effort to read all those ponderous tomes, but if you're interested, there's always a community-college lecture series on subversion in literature by women, and another on tolerance in our diverse community. ©

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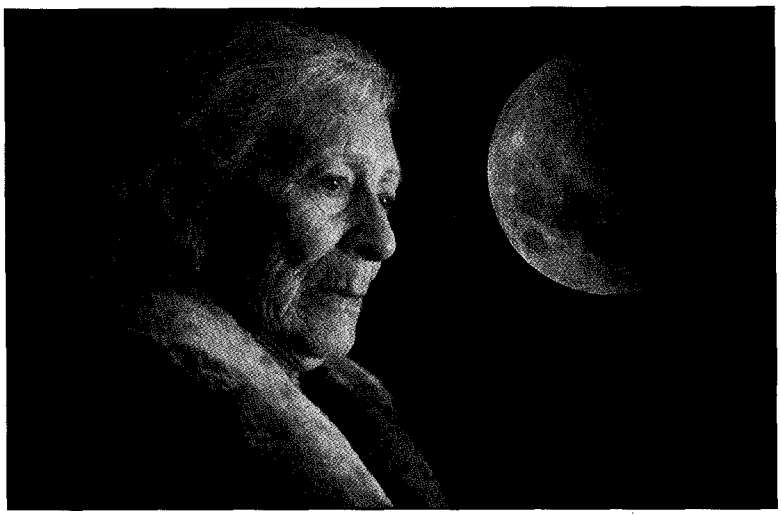
Your Hit Parade

A Story

by Anthony Bukoski



Melanie Anderson

"If Mel Torme is 'The Velvet Fog,' shouldn't I at least be 'The Elegant Mist'? Surveys indicate that even during station identification, which this is, you enjoy hearing my radio voice. From the studio at the antenna farm, I, Luther Craft (formerly Larry Krabenhoff), read your news, weather, commercials. I take requests, introduce singers, bands. On this, *The Night Train Show*, you want to hear Julie London, Duke Ellington, Johnny Mathis, Jimmy Dorsey, Glen Gray and His Casa Loma Orchestra, Vic Damone, other soothing voices and bands. Anything from the 40's and 50's. Frankie Laine, Etta James, Percy Faith, Nat 'King' Cole.

"Demographics show that Superior, Wisconsin, needs an 'easy listening' station, that many of you are old and tired. In our station's survey, sixty percent of you describe yourselves as 'Young Old Timers.' Forty percent of you receive Meals on Wheels. Twenty-two percent visit Senior Citizen Centers at least twice weekly for companionship. Five percent play canasta at the Centers.

"Hey, *I'm* a senior citizen. You and I, we don't need demographic surveys to know we're oldsters who like things done right. I am a voice broadcasting from an old town who knows our music is best.

"Golden Agers, 1390 AM is the place for you. *The Night Train Show*. That hint of raspiness in my voice suggests I've been around. I used to work at KSAD-Radio in these Twin Ports of Superior-Duluth, where our playlist consisted of sad songs. Roy Orbison's 'Crying,' Elvis's 'Kentucky Rain,' Johnny Ray's 'The Little White Cloud That Cried'—mainly songs from the early-to-mid rock era.

"I'm glad I made the switch to the easy-listening format at 1390. This low, confident voice assures you when autumn leaves start to fall, we'll have these moments to remember. It assures you, young at heart 1390 listeners, that 'You're sure to survive to a hundred and five, if you're young at heart.' (Remember *that* catchy Sinatra lyric?) Here I am to tell you love is a many splendored thing, 'so if she's the one,' as Pat Boone reminds us, 'don't let her slip away.' You won't slip away from me, dear friends. There may be no one else for you but Luther.

"At 3 A.M., I hope I'm easy to listen to when I confess these personal matters. It's you and me: Lute hugging the mic, speaking to you one on one, to *your* heart alone. I have love for each of you. Love for you on East Third Street all by yourself. Can't sleep tonight?—I have love for you in the downstairs apartment on North Seventeenth, and for you, lonely lady, on South Tower Avenue. You're still a *Night Train* fan, aren't you? I need you, you know. I bet your lights are on. You're broken-hearted over the fellow who left you. Despite what you say—that he was no good—you cry yourself to sleep. Sometimes you hum the *Moulin Rouge* theme from that wonderful movie John Huston directed with Jose Ferrer and Zsa Zsa in '52. Was that the song you said, dear lady? Or was it 'Theme From *A Summer Place*'? Call me tonight. Let me know. I've been waiting to hear from you. I forgot the title you once told me, but I haven't forgotten you in your sadness, how your mother and you saw the movie when you were young. You sat in the enclosed smoking loge upstairs at the Superior

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Anthony Bukoski's short-story collection North of the Port *will be published in May.*

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Theater in East End. The wide glass window let you see the show while it kept your mother's cigarette smoke from drifting downstairs. Half a century later, you watch *Moulin Rouge* or *A Summer Place* on the VCR that your ex-lover allowed you to keep when he returned to his wife—a payoff for your broken heart after loving him.

"I'm broken hearted, too. I told you my wife pulled out on me twenty years ago when I was still at KSAD. I was forty-eight then. That was the topic of last week's *Night Train Show*: my disastrous marriage. Topics of the preceding weeks were a person's faith in God and the joys of friendship for the senior citizen living in Superior, Wisconsin. Tonight's topic is the story of my sister's piano career.

"At 3 A.M. this night of a blue moon, the world is ours, dear listeners. We'll grow old together a song at a time at 1390. Here's an item to grow old by: Did you know a 'blue moon' has nothing to do with color, but with a coincidence that occurs when two full moons appear in the same month? This happens infrequently, which is why you hear the phrase 'once in a blue moon.'"

"Tonight, from the studio at the antenna farm where twenty antennas beam every local radio and TV stations' signal, give me fifteen minutes. Then we'll have Rosemary Clooney, Glen Miller, Harry James, Sinatra again. If you listen, I'll give *you* alone my heart in the middle of this night of a blue moon. You've been so good that I'll offer you a very lonely, personal view of Luther. Please call, listener from the past whose song I forgot. At night on the radio, we'll dream together. We'll forget the present, forget what the Twin Ports and America have become in 2007. Are movies good these days? I don't go to them. Before work last night, I watched five minutes of TV. An anorexic girl in a bikini balanced plates, saucers, and a teacup on the end of a stick while an emcee told her she could join the 'tribal council.' What does it mean, this and the iPods, MP3 players, and HGH Major League Baseball players insist they don't use? When daylight comes, do you get the feeling, Golden Agers, that we don't belong, we don't understand America?

"Something's off in the new century. I don't want it. I get home at seven in the morning. I draw the blinds, put on a pot of coffee, play my 45's and 78's. I live in the darkness of the modern world remembering TWIRP dances at East High, Superior Blues minor-league baseball, 'Catman' Walker, the WEBC deejay.

"Duluth was a great city back then, too. You know that, 1390's Duluth listeners. What a journey for us over the Arrowhead or Interstate Bridge from Superior. When ore and grain boats approached the bridges on the St. Louis River estuary, the bridges' center spans lifted or swung out; the traffic stopped high up there. Buses, trucks, and automobiles sometimes had to wait a half hour. Duluth had a small amusement park on Minnesota Point. You could see it from up on the Interstate Bridge. The merry-go-round, the concession stand, miles of summer beaches—in the distance 'red sails in the sunset.' Life was quiet. Nothing extreme then in Superior-Duluth. To promote yourself during today's Apocalypse, you have to wear black, contort your body when you swagger, say 'yo' to everything, send hand signals to your 'homey.' This will establish you as the Man, establish that you are from the 'hood, though Superior has no bad neighborhoods, so I don't know which 'hood this could be. If you're young, it's important to be extreme, to be alienated, important to wear 'bling,' to 'Do the Dew.' I'm talking about white kids. It's not for me to speak of anyone else. They make up ninety-nine-point-nine percent of Superior's youth. Some of them despise their color. They want to leave the split-level or the historic home overlooking Hammond or Washington Park to live in an East St. Louis tenement. Despite his swagger, a boy from Superior wouldn't last a minute down there. East St. Louis is someone else's problem.

"I'm pounded from dreams, sometimes, by cars going by—kids named Michalski, Anderson, and Swenson playing hop-hip or hop, skip, and a-jump music on their radio. What's appealing about AK-47s and drugs? Sometimes these kids park outside the station, radios thumping, blasting. I lock the gate at night. On cell phones, they call Luther in the studio. They say, 'Yo, why you dissin' my music, why you dissin' Fi'ty Cent and Outkast?' They suck the spirit from life, menace me—menace us, good listeners—with woofers, subwoofers, foul language. Sweatshirt hoods hide their faces. Let's say there are eighty or ninety such kids in the city. You see them about. Their great-grandparents attend Concordia Lutheran, St. Alban the Martyr. Probably they are my listeners. Probably one of them is tuned in tonight. I know you're sick of what you see, Great-grandparents.

"We must stick together. We can do this on the radio at night. We can do it another way by banding together to fight for our rights and our safety. We will draw the blinds at home, watch reruns of *Wagon Train*. Golden Agers, we'll make a world out of the one left behind. What we had in the 40's and 50's was precious. I'm serious. This is my plan: I advocate for a life lived in the twilight of the past. It was good then. 'Heavenly shades of night are falling. It's twilight time.' Why give this up? Why abandon Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel in *Show Boat* or Gene Kelly in *Singin' in the Rain*? Why not form special interest groups where we treat ourselves differently from the way AARP does? Our groups will specialize in what twilight really offers—the notion that our lives have been fulfilled, the notion that a day is almost done. We will be local. We will be locally run. No AARP for us.

"I am, you know, for Greer Garson and Maureen O'Hara on the screen; for dinners with the family gathered round (if the kids aren't there, imagine how it was when they were); for a deemphasis on reality TV and so-called news shows, for a reemphasis on old movies and easy listening. I propose the clubs we form spend afternoons enjoying yearbooks from Superior's and Duluth's high schools—old newspapers, too. Once a week someone can report

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on what happened in the Twin Ports on January 6, 1947, on August 1, 1950, on October 18, 1953. Cloquet, Proctor, and Two Harbors Golden Agers, we'll reminisce about your glory days. During our meetings at area Drop-In Centers, we can listen to The Mills Brothers, The Inkspots, The Lettermen. We can dance and sing till 'deep purple falls over sleepy garden walls.' We'll call ourselves 'The Gold Club,' 'The Silver Club,' 'Traditions' maybe. The point is, we must be deliberate. Members must agree the past is better, and we must want to make the past the present. We'll live in the velvet fog of our youth. Call Luther. Call him tonight to tell him we *can* succeed by hiding out in memory. At my age, sixty-something years young, I have many, many memories.

"It's no big deal about my sister, Maria. At 3:07 A.M., she's someone to talk about. Three years older than me, she lives in Phoenix—Sun City, actually—with her husband. In that golden place, she's probably gotten beyond the bad spot in her life some fifty-odd years ago. Sorrow recalled often will make you want to stop living. That's my job, to get your mind off of things at 3:09 this morning. 'Primrose Lane, life's a holiday on Primrose Lane.' Give me ten minutes, and I'll get you back to the music of your life.

"Maria had a chance to be on Jack Paar. At the Superior Theater talent show, the first prize was a trip to Milwaukee where, we were told, a judge would choose the person who'd be on Mr. Paar's program in New York City. I was in eighth grade. I never attended one talent show. That's how strict our dad was. Movies playing before the talent show—things like *Al Capone* or Jane Russell in *The Outlaw*—were almost always in the 'Morally Objectionable' category on the list we followed in the *Our Sunday Visitor*, so I couldn't go to them. I know this: Kids who tap-danced or made hand silhouettes and funny noises or performed magic tricks didn't get past the first night of the competition. Those who played bebop or Fats Domino had a chance, because the place would be packed with high schoolers to cheer them on. Who'd applaud a tap-dancing eighth grader from Cooper School?

"I don't remember adults entering the talent competition. Refresh me on this point. It's never too late at night or too early in the morning to telephone your faithful Luther. *Moulin Rouge* lady, I want to hear from you. It isn't All Soul's Night, but May 31, a blue-moon night. Pretend it is All Soul's, though, because it's just your heart and mine. My soul is lonely. I have nothing awaiting me at home but old songs and a Mercury AG 4100 hi-fi from 1960 to spin them on, not even a console but a portable that 'plays all records, sizes, and speeds—monaural or stereo.'

"Maria Krabenhoff, what a lovely name to say over the radio. 'Maria, I just met a girl named Ma-ri-a.' Somehow, playing 'Malaguena' and 'Claire de Lune' on the piano, she got through the month of preliminary competition. When Maria, a winner, came in with my parents at eleven o'clock, she'd be smiling. Out of gratitude to the theater manager, they'd stayed for the double feature. She was a sophomore. As far as my parents were concerned, she could see movies that were Morally Objectionable in Part if she advanced to the next week.

"'Was it as exciting as ever tonight?' Ma'd ask about the performance.

"'Jack Paar's still on,' Dad would say, opening a bottle of beer at the kitchen table.

"'I want to be on *Your Hit Parade*. I could accompany Snooky Lanson on 'This Ol' House' and Gisele MacKenzie on 'Canadian Sunset,' Maria would say. Bustling about in the outfit she'd worn at her command performance at the Superior Theater, she must have thought she was in Vienna or Paris.

"'You're on your way. Jack Paar's waiting,' Dad would say, having another beer, opening one for my mother.

"WEBC 560 broadcast the final two Fridays live. Figuring she couldn't win with the kind of music her piano teacher encouraged her to play, I still listened—mainly to hear someone perform a fast song with a beat. No one cares about classical music; Maria had no chance to win, my friends and I figured. We were pulling for a band from the North End called Ronnie Carl and the Roulettes.

"Our family and our relatives belonged as much to the East End neighborhood as we did to St. Francis Xavier Church. My parents bought groceries here, had our shoes fixed here, went to the dime store or Lederman's Clothing Store here. Because of their talented daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Krabenhoff were suddenly important. This was '57. No wonder the excitement about my sister. There was no cable TV, no multiplex theaters, no X Games. When Maria got through the semifinal night, Ma asked people in the bakery to come to the one remaining talent show to support her. My dad bought rounds for the guys at Stranko's Tavern, then shifted his base of operations across the street to Howard's Tavern, then down to Nadolski's. My uncles and aunts lobbied their friends on Maria's behalf. To see them acting like this, and Dad drinking so much because he couldn't handle the excitement, was odd, for they were mainly quiet people who stayed out of the limelight. Maria's success was now my parents' and my relatives' success. I knew this is when—tonight in 2007—I'd start to feel bad at this moment. I knew it. Stay tuned. We've got a commercial break—"

"Now that I've told you to pre-buy oil and propane from Como Oil for next year's heating season, I can't wait to give you the story. Something's hidden in my heart. What have I got to lament? I ask those of you tuned in at 3:18 A.M. of a person's life. Maybe I should lament that when people leave, I am lost. When I sign off from you, good listeners, I'm lost. My wife left. Did I tell you? I did? Yes, I forgot. When I look in the mirror in the living room at home, I see a radio personality who got the future he deserved. No one but Luther rides the Night Train. I am the Moonlight Gambler Frankie Laine told you about.

"When you've been in radio this long, in order to rest,

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you sometimes need a commercial break or a news break at the top of the hour when we go to the network. On this special night with Luther, I need no breaks, however. Are you out there? Are you with me? I don't mean you with your music shaking the earth outside the gate.

"In '57, I got jealous of my sister. If she persisted in playing classical music, then none of the kids in eighth grade—me included—wanted her winning. No one at East High School wanted Maria to win, I bet. My friends and I thought it was a setup between the theater manager and the grown-ups to choose her the winner. The adults believed my mature sister's success would set a good example for the rest of us, and that's why they came out on the last night of the talent competition—or so we figured. My buddies and I were wrong about the setup, which at least wasn't an inside job as far as the manager was concerned. He had nothing to do with fixing the show. His job was to help promote a contest that was run by some guy from outside of town, a guy we heard was a talent scout.

"The week before the big night, I started getting dirty looks from kids who wanted Ronnie Carl and the Roulettes to win. 'Why's she wrecking it for us?' they'd ask me at school or when I was going somewhere.

"I told them I'd disown her if she won. I had a lot of reasons to be angry. Because I was related to Maria Krabenhoff, the musician, there was my reputation to worry about. Everything in the house always revolved around my sister, with her honey-blonde hair, her green eyes, her long fingers racing over the keyboard. Her hands flew in the air when she played. You were reminded of Liberace.

"Fifty-some years later, I can tell you she didn't stand a chance. After what Ronnie Carl and the Roulettes played, Liberace performing 'The Warsaw Concerto' couldn't have won. Maybe it being the first Friday in Lent had something to do with how things turned out. Perhaps that year, on March 8, God descended over a theater that stood within sight of a steeple. Something holy happened a block from St. Francis.

"For a week, she'd practiced at school, so I had no idea what she'd be playing. Ear to the radio, I was excited after hearing the Roulettes, excited that nobody could beat them. Then someone introduced Maria. I heard kids boo. She coughed twice, I suppose out of nervousness, then started Schubert's 'Ave Maria,' and I think people were so moved and affected by the selection that no one applauded, but when they did, it kept on for four full minutes on a Friday night. The roses she won (Ronnie Carl presented them to her) ended up in a cut-glass vase next to the Virgin's statue on our dining-room table.

"When my sister and my mother left for Milwaukee, kids were hanging around the neighbor's front porch watching everything at our house. Mr. Moniak would drive them to the train station while my dad was at work. After bringing out the suitcases, I beat it back inside the house. Ma looked at the downstairs picture window, then at my room upstairs to see why I wasn't coming to say goodbye. The front of the gray-shingled house must have seemed as blank to my mother as Maria's face at that moment: My sister couldn't believe she was a star. Many East Enders had donated money for the trip. All expenses would be paid by the sponsor when they arrived in Milwaukee.

"To avoid the kids who'd watched her leave in Moniak's car, I slipped out the back door and went down the alley to the drugstore, which, for a few days, had had stickers in the window advertising aspirin, cough syrup, pills, toothpaste, shaving cream—all for a penny if you bought one for the regular price. From 2 to 4 P.M., a disk jockey was broadcasting live the way we occasionally do today from Devinck Motors. When a song went out, he'd chat with customers. After the record ended, he'd go live over the air again advertising the sale in 'Friendly East End.'

"A few grown-ups stood around watching when I got there. Two or three women from church busied themselves at the greeting-card rack. Some high schoolers were walking in. When I looked up from the comic book I was examining, I saw my future in Gerry 'Catman' Walker, who looked different, cooler, than I'd expected him to. Someone had pointed me out to him as the brother of a soon-to-be New York celebrity.

"'Come on over,' he said. 'Do you want to make a request?'

"Pointing to the record he had playing on the turntable, he waited for it to end, then put down another record. Turning on the mic, he said, 'This one goes out for Maria Krabenhoff.' 'That's the name, right? She won the talent show?' he asked me off-mic; then he held the microphone toward me. 'What's next for our listeners' enjoyment?' He wanted me to tell the radio audience what I'd requested.

"I stuttered. I was so nervous I asked *him* to say what it was, but 'Catman' Walker laughed and shook his head at me until, gathering strength, I whispered 'Blue Moon,' and for the three minutes it played, I was famous at a 1¢ sale."

"My effort wasn't worth a penny. There was no talent competition, no judge, no hotel reservations in downtown Milwaukee. We'd been set up by a stranger who'd convinced the theater manager, the entire neighborhood, and the city to trust him, then left with two months of talent-show money, probably a thousand dollars. They never caught him. You might remember reading about it in the paper.

"That night in a Milwaukee hotel, after she found out there'd be no *Jack Paar Show*, I wonder how Maria got through her sorrow. Knowing the embarrassment awaiting them at home, what could Ma have told her? Night after night from this area of broadcast antennas reddening the sky with fires that may never be extinguished, I play the songs of memory, recall the past, the losses, the hurt. Can you hear me, Maria? In the studio or in the house where we grew up and where I live alone, I wonder every night about you and about God's presence in our lives. Why did this happen to you? Why did I act as I did? When you came home, I pretended to my friends you'd suffered a reverse divine intervention for playing what

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you'd played to keep Rockin' Ronnie Carl from going to Milwaukee. I cannot forget the things I did, 1390 listeners. How do you forget music that haunts you?

"I won't pretend to be what I'm not. You know me too well. Let me quote this one Bible verse, however, for I am generally not a holy man. In Numbers, when Aaron and Miriam grow jealous of Moses, he intercedes with the Lord to cure her of her 'white leprosy,' a mild punishment. The Lord says to him, 'Suppose her father had spit in her face, would she not hide in shame for seven days?' Maria, too, had been shamed. My parents had been shamed by what happened. The greatest shame was mine, I've seen over the years. They were innocent. I wasn't. I'd hated her for a time.

"Maria returned to East High, but it was hell there for her. Kids laughed and talked about her. My parents didn't know how to give back the quarters and dimes people had contributed for the trip. The bank had given ten dollars; Art Haugen at the drugstore, ten; St. Francis Church, fifteen.

"My mother kept us going by figuring a way out of the embarrassment of owing anyone anything. She worked hard around the neighborhood, baked for people, did favors for them. Dad stopped drinking. Maria got through the school year, but quit practicing the piano. Why should she have hidden in shame when she'd done nothing wrong? I was the one who should have been punished for what, like Aaron and Miriam, I'd done behind my sister's back by ridiculing her.

"In time, Maria graduated, left home to work. I went in the service, kicked about for a year or two afterward, but I could never get the East End neighborhood out of my mind. When I returned home from my travels, I thought about selling insurance with my cousin, the American Family agent. But how could I insure others when I never insured myself? Where do you buy a policy against regret?

"With Maria out west, I grow lonely in the house where we grew up. Outside on the street, I hear car speakers pounding rap music, hip-hop. Things were better back then—no school shootings, no ear-splitting music. Here in the 1390 studio tonight, I think of the uninsured of long ago. Antennas beam signals to the sky, always outward, always away. Tonight, I have you with me to hear these transmissions from the heart. We go inward tonight, deep into the place where we try to make amends.

"At 3:26, let me tell you the signals of people from back then—Gerry 'Catman' Walker of 1¢ sale fame, my parents, my aunts and uncles—come in clearly everyday. Maria's signal, I never hear, though. Never. Before taking the trip so many years ago that changed her life, I wonder if she heard my request. I wonder if she is listening tonight. This next song is for you, Beloved Sister, so far away. And it's for you, *Moulin Rouge* lady. And for the rest of you 1390 listeners. Jo Stafford's 'Blue Moon.' I'll be quiet now and listen." ⟡

Jean Sibelius Bags a Soviet Plane, 1948

by Larry Johnson

The maestro's yard, near mossed, penumbral pines,
Echoes the bluesteel hunting rifle's crack:
The fighter circles, wings off—was it a Yak
9 or Mig 3? No matter. Another shines
In cloudsifted sun, dropping lower. He fires again,
Leading the target this time with a vow
To sacrifice his frozen *Eighth* if now
He pierces the smirking aircraft, causes pain
For one damned Russian cog . . . so slivery smoke
Trails from the engine. A wobble. The pilot turns
East, igniting oil billows out. *Fate's joke*,
He thinks, watching the smeared speck as it burns,
Roils brumy below horizon, its soundless crash
Too soon avenged by his music's snowclean ash.

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Anatomy of a Meltdown

The Subprime Crisis

by David A. Hartman

At the close of 2007, the bloated inventories and declining prices of residential housing confirmed that the real-estate bubble had burst. This was triggered by losses on collateralized mortgage obligations (CMOs), which are based on pools of "subprime" mortgage collateral. Residential prices have not yet fallen below the levels of 2001 (when the bubble began) and, for the moment, remain above recession-level prices. The meltdown, however, is on.

Over the last several years, our soaring trade deficits have filled our foreign competitors' coffers, causing them to seek investments that are more attractive than U.S. Treasury bills. Because the large commercial investment properties they prefer have been priced very high, U.S. financiers began selling them the derivatives of residential mortgages pools. The adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM) pools offer investors the largest source of inflation-adjustable securities, along with the protection of insurance against default and the prospect of higher average interest rates over the life of the securities.

Ever since the Great Depression, Congress has created federal agencies that accept or insure mortgages. Government-sponsored agencies multiplied after World War II, as insurance providers for the home mortgages of returning veterans. Savings and loans, also sponsored by Washington, were the principal investors in these insured home mortgages until the 1980's, when Congress deregulated deposit interest rates and the S&L's crumbled.

Today, eight different federal agencies accept or insure mortgages for lower- or middle-priced houses, led by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Each is a "government-sponsored agency": The agency alone, not the federal government, offers the guarantee, but each is considered a federal guarantor and, therefore, "too big to fail." The Federal Home Administration (FHA) and the farm-home agencies who insure mortgages for lower-income homes are government agencies, and their insurance policies are claims on the federal government. These are joined by private insurers, such as MBIA, Ambac, and ACA, who insure "unqualified" mortgages. Banks also offer direct uninsured mortgages for lower-risk loans, good customers, and "jumbos"—mortgages that exceed federal size limits. In recent years, federal regulators have sought to reduce Fannie Mae's and Freddie Mac's domination of buying, insuring, and (especially) holding home mortgages.

Mortgage bankers originate the mortgages sold to insurers. The insurers then sell pools of mortgages, grouped together by characteristics such as geographical location, size, and credit rating, to investment bankers. The bankers divide the cash flows of these CMOs into "tranches," which provide the right to first or last collections of cash flows, to separation of interest *versus* principal payments, or to other derivatives designed to serve as investment products. These tranches are then rated by agencies such as Standard & Poor's or Moody's. Compared with normal debt securities, some mortgage derivatives are difficult to rate, because of the complexities of economic events and their effects on repayment. Still, the more conservative mortgage pools have been a reliable source of customized securities.

Three factors have destabilized the successful replacement of S&L's with CMOs, precipitating the meltdown. First, for adventurous investors, CDOs (collateralized debt obligations) became attractive. They provide potentially more profitable alternatives to CMOs, from pools of quality CMOs to credit cards, automobile loans, commercial loans, and other debt obligations of various credit quality—some, with potentially higher interest rates. Until recently, CDOs had been reasonably predictable and successful in collecting debts, thanks to good times and good underwriting—both of which have changed. Second has been the introduction of subprime home mortgages, which have proved hard to rate accurately, as they lack both long-term default experience and, increasingly, diligent underwriting. Both the Clinton administration and the Bush administration have pressured lenders to offer subprime ARMs to borrowers with lower incomes and/or poor credit histories. The risk of subprime pools was amplified by incompetent or fraudulent underwriting by mortgage bankers. Finally, the commercial and investment bankers funded the subprime mortgages through "structured investment vehicles" (SIVs), which are clandestine off-balance-sheet units with no appreciable reserves to stand behind the pools and their tranches—a carbon copy of the source of the Enron fiasco. What investors—foreigners awash in dollars, in particular—failed to realize is that garbage in a fancy bag is still garbage.

The total book value of mortgages on U.S. residences is $14 trillion, of which $2.5 trillion is currently "guesstimated" to be subprime. The potential losses to financial

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institutions have been estimated from $100 to $400 billion; but the estimated losses of just a few of the major commercial and investment banks have already surpassed the $100-billion mark. Standard & Poor's estimate of $265 million seems reasonable, which would put the subprime mortgage crisis in the same ballpark as the S&L crisis. But that estimate fails to take into account the problematic CDO pools. For commercial loans, which total $300 billion per year, the lowest-rated now account for 32 percent of new lending, compared with 20.9 percent in 2006, the previous peak. The whole industry colluded in packaging the derivatives of subprime CMOs and CDOs; mortgage bankers, insurers, rating agencies, and bankers (along with their hedge funds and SIVs) will share in liabilities for these losses.

At the root of this crisis is excessive liquidity—an inflated money supply—which invariably promotes speculation and low-grade lending. The greatest villain in this drama is the Federal Reserve, as mismanaged by Alan Greenspan and his protégé, Ben Bernanke. From his appointment in 1987, Greenspan's all-purpose solution was excessive injections of liquidity. No matter how overvalued the stock market, commodities, and real-estate prices, Greenspan's Fed has attempted to shield financiers from the painful losses necessary to restore the stability of mortgage markets and the value of the dollar.

With a bleak outlook for housing, shrinking auto production, and a declining manufacturing sector, more liquidity and deficits will, at best, result in stagflation. What is needed are real remedies—implementing border-adjusted tax reform, reestablishing regulation of all financial institutions, reforming the financing of social insurance, closing trade and fiscal deficits, and restoring the value of the dollar as a store of value, which promotes personal saving.

The growth of highly leveraged innovations—particularly hedge funds and SIVs—has been unchecked by the Federal Reserve. As Greenspan admitted in his recent book, *The Age of Turbulence*, these vehicles have created trillions of dollars of liquidity that are not publicly visible and, therefore, are excluded from any effective measure of the money supply. By and large, the banks and the rest of the financial sector have enjoyed unprecedented and unsustainable profits. The cost of the present meltdown to American citizens has yet to be calculated. One thing is certain: It will be painful.

As of this writing, the Federal Reserve has purchased $130 billion in additional Treasury notes as emergency support for the security markets. In his 2008 State of the Union Address, President Bush proposed a $150-billion "economic stimulus" package, which has been approved by Congress. The package comprises tax rebates and tax reductions along with relief for subprime mortgagees. Both moves are short-term fixes aimed at avoiding an inevitable recession; neither will put Americans back on the road to solvency.

Once again, the Federal Reserve Bank has failed to exercise its role as an independent overseer of financial institutions; it has failed to restrain the growth rate of the money supply, which is necessary to promote the stable growth of the economy; and it has failed to defend the dollar as a stable store of value. Since Greenspan's appointment as Fed chairman, the dollar has declined 42 cents in value, as measured by the GNP deflator. In the years following World War I, the Federal Reserve Board mismanaged the money supply, helping to cause the Great Depression. Following the reinflation of price levels caused by World War II, the dollar's purchasing power has declined to nine cents in 1946 dollars. Nothing has changed: The "Debt Supercycle" continues its hyperinflation, thanks to the President's and Congress's excessive spending and growing deficits—which are always justified by contrived calamities—while the Fed responds obligingly by flooding the economy with liquidity. Instead of serving as the "lender of last resort" to the commercial banks, the Federal Reserve has been the banker of crisis (big or small). Its top priority is the profit of the Wall Street speculators; its last priority is the preservation of the value of the savings and pensions of the disappearing middle class.

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The parallels between the circumstances of the current financial dilemma and those at the onset of the Great Depression are striking. In the decade leading up to the Depression, individual debt had increased 43 percent relative to disposable incomes, financing a period of false prosperity and excessive consumption. Similarly, the decade from 1997 to 2007 saw a 49-percent increase in household debt compared with incomes, as Americans spent their money on imports and unaffordable residences. During the 20's, the distinguished investment bankers were "watering the stocks" of the utilities, railroads, and industrials, while the "bear raiders" were shorting weak stocks, taking control, and stripping their working capital; both then sold the stocks stripped of cash and loaded with debt. Bank-holding trusts pyramided assets on inadequate capital. In recent years, investment bankers, hedge funds, and global banks and their SIVs have been indulging in the same unrestrained pillage and greed.

The combination of an inflated money supply and excess indebtedness always results in unworthy credit, which undermines the economy. When the day of reckoning arrived in 1930, the government and regulators made all the wrong moves. Do we have any reason to believe that our current utopians will do any better? ©

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by Taki Theodoracopulos

Dealing With the Devil

I do not normally take pronouncements from show-business folk seriously—they are almost always publicity ploys—but in the Mia Farrow and Steven Spielberg case against Beijing's "Genocide Olympics," I will gladly make an exception. We all know that there is something rotten at the heart of modern sport, starting with the Olympics, which was, once upon a time, a meeting of gifted and courageous amateurs vying for glory, and is now reduced to a festival of corporate greed and nationalistic jingoism.

As China scours the world for raw materials—soya beans and iron from Brazil, copper from Chile and Zambia, oil from Venezuela and Sudan, natural gas from Iran and Burma—she does not exactly demand a clean sheet where human rights are concerned. And why should she? Giant American corporations will deal with the devil, so long as the profits keep rolling in. But there are limits. The one black spot that has isolated communist China is the sale of weapons to Khartoum, as bloodthirsty a regime as Robert's Mugabe in Zimbabwe, and one that has killed 200,000 people while forcing a further 2.5 million from their homes in a classic case of ethnic cleansing. China, of course, turns a blind eye to the genocide, because Khartoum delivers two thirds of its huge oil reserves to Beijing.

Back in 1957, my father had been approached by two "gentlemen" while exiting his house in Athens. They had a crumbled piece of paper with my name on it, and their English was described by my father as Brooklynese. He immediately got the message. He told them to follow him to his office and paid them $4,000 on the spot. "They were very polite," he told me later, "and I thanked them for helping me decide that my younger son was an idiot and very stupid to boot." Two weeks before, I had borrowed $2,000 from them in New York in order to continue my pursuit of a famous Hollywood actress in style. I had signed a note guaranteeing them double in 15 days. In the throes of romance at age 20, two weeks can seem a lifetime. I also planned to skip town as the weather was hotting up. That evening, my father announced at dinner that my punishment for my recklessness would be exile to Khartoum, where he owned the largest textile factory in Africa, providing 5,000 air-conditioned jobs to grateful Sudanese.

It was some punishment. I was installed in a large house by the banks of the Nile, with two servants and a chauffeur, and in no time was introduced to President Abboud, a benevolent general (and a favorite of Jackie Kennedy) to whom I would give a monthly stipend of £100 as a gesture of good will. I played tennis with the great German Baron Gottfried von Cramm, a three-time Wimbledon finalist, rubbed shoulders with the Kroups, who were building a bridge between Omdurman and Khartoum north, and fell madly in love with Grace K—, a beauty who may have been the model for Justine, in Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. On weekends, we would all fly privately to Alexandria for more cosmopolitan high jinks, with Bill Wilde, the CIA station chief and a Yul Brynner lookalike, providing the transport. Every night, we'd meet at Gordon's, an outdoor nightclub that provided the ultimate in Arab pre-war hospitality, if you know what I mean. The European contingent was straight out of Durrell, if not Fitzgerald.

My idyllic lifestyle was not to last. The descendant of the Mahdi, the slayer of General Gordon in the siege of Khartoum 60-some years before, overthrew General Abboud, nationalized our factories, and sent me packing. Having won the Sudanese tennis championship two years running, I was not detained at the airport as my father feared. (The German contingent had cleared out earlier, but I was in love and had stayed behind.) Ten years later, on my way to Kenya on a photographic safari, I stopped in Khartoum and visited the factory. It was a burned-out shell. So much for "foreigners out" nationalism.

Which brings me to the point of my story. Between 1983 and 2005—well before the killings in Darfur—Muslims murdered two million Christians and other "infidels" in southern Sudan and displaced four million more, with thousands sold into slavery. This genocide was ignored by the West. A peace agreement between north and south left the capital Khartoum as a stronghold of *sharia*. Furthermore, the north has been Islamicizing the south by coercion, offering housing and medical help in exchange for conversion. There is an ever-widening push by Muslims to control the Horn of Africa, and in Nigeria, 12 states are now governed by *sharia*. This is the outcome of a systematic plan funded largely by Saudi Arabia in cahoots with Khartoum. The great prize is a new continental front in the war to Islamicize the free world. Africa will soon be what Afghanistan was to terrorism in the turn of this century.

Sudan, like Zimbabwe, should be classified a pariah state, shunned by all nations who belong to the useless United Nations. But China needs oil, and Sudan needs guns to kill Christians and Africans—hence, the Farrow-Spielberg protest. For once, it is not a cynical ploy for publicity but a decent gesture against the cynicism of the Chinese commies. But I have yet to hear from the Bush White House. In fact, in response to Sudan's genocide, it might invade Malta.

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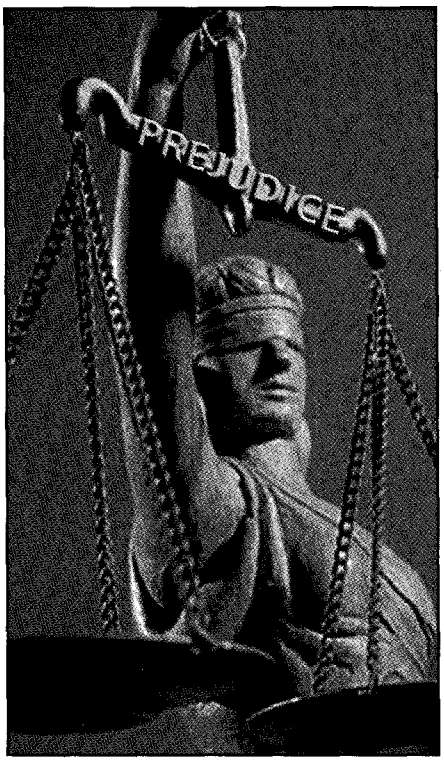
Prejudice Made Plausible

by Jack Trotter

"Without the aid of prejudice and custom, I should not be able to find my way across the room."

—William Hazlitt

In Praise of Prejudice: The Necessity of Preconceived Ideas
by Theodore Dalrymple
New York: Encounter Books; 129 pp., $20.00



Melanie Anderson

The "prejudice against prejudice," as Theodore Dalrymple ironically terms it, has become so culturally pervasive that many—perhaps most—people are completely unaware that the term has not always been exclusively pejorative. The Latin *prejudicare*, in its primary sense, meant simply to "judge or rule beforehand" (as in a legal proceeding), though it could also signify an injurious action. Eric Partridge, in his etymological dictionary *Origins*, cites Tertullian as an early example of one who employed the term in this latter sense. Moreover, it is also true that the OED's citations, dating back to the 13th century, are weighted heavily on the side of injury or "hasty judgement." Yet in its most inclusive meaning (most relevant for present purposes), *prejudice* is simply "a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward any person or thing, prior to [*sic*] or not based on actual experience; . . . an unreasoning predilection or objection" (OED). Please note that "unreasoning" need not in itself imply anything malicious or hurtful. I have a prejudice against Brussels sprouts; I have never actually tasted them. I am put off my feed by the odor alone. I have never subjected my prejudice to empirical enquiry. When it comes to the odious sprout, I am anything but Baconian, yet my prejudice against the pale cabbage is perfectly harmless.

Whether I prefer broccoli or Brussels sprouts, Bach or Beethoven, is, of course a matter of "taste," or prejudice. Everyone recognizes that in matters of aesthetic judgement, prejudice is an inescapable factor. I will no doubt believe until the day I die that Bach is superior to Beethoven, but I do not (unless my unreasoning predilection has become fanatical) stigmatize the lover of Beethoven as somehow an inferior being. There is no malice in my prejudice. And I would be the first to admit that I can never "prove" to the satisfaction of any but lovers of Bach that *The Musical Offering* is a finer work than anything Beethoven ever composed. But when we move from the purely aesthetic realm (if there is such a thing) into the realms of morality, politics, jurisprudence, or even scientific judgement, most of us are apt to suppose that prejudice not only can be but should be eliminated from our deliberations. Yet, as Theodore Dalrymple attempts to demonstrate in his *In Praise of Prejudice*, prejudice plays an indispensable role in all judgment and is closely allied to the formation of character. Thus, Edmund Burke once wrote that "Prejudice renders a man's virtue his habit. . . . Through just prejudice, his duty becomes a part of his nature." For most of our contemporaries, Burke's apothegm is virtually incomprehensible. How, we might ask, can a prejudice be just? Isn't that simply oxymoronic? And doesn't Burke reveal the injustice of his own prejudices by employing sexist language ("a man's virtue") and by assuming that there is such a thing as human nature? And what about that hurtful word "duty," which implies some external code of behavior that may do injury to our pursuit of per-

Jack Trotter writes from Charleston, South Carolina.

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sonal happiness?

Today, we commonly use *prejudice* to describe, not our own behavior, but the behavior of those of whom we disapprove. Dalrymple notes that no one,

> at least in polite company, would admit to a prejudice about anything: To admit to prejudice is to proclaim oneself a bigot, the kind of person who can't, or worse still, won't examine his preconceptions.

By our own lights, it would seem, we live in the most nonjudgmental, enlightened era in human history. Aside from the occasional bigot who, like the antediluvian farmer in Robert Frost's (often misunderstood) "Mending Wall," lives in his own mental darkness "like a stone-savage armed," we make no judgments that are not reasoned judgments. "Every proper man . . . is a Descartes on every subject and every question that comes before him," forming opinions that owe nothing "to unexamined pre-suppositions." Or so we like to flatter ourselves. We may disapprove of the man who homeschools his children and believes that the Bible provides a factual account of human origins; we may shake our heads at the woman who believes that her place is in the home with her children; or we may believe that gangsta rappers are paragons of artistic originality. But none dare call such judgments prejudice.

How, then, did we arrive at such an advanced degree of enlightened self-deception? Dalrymple identifies a number of culprits, but chief among them is John Stuart Mill, whose *On Liberty* provides a philosophical foundation for the view that the truly sovereign individual must owe nothing to preconceived opinion or authority—the view that absolutely everything must be subject to rational examination. To place one's faith in hand-me-down opinions is to sacrifice some part of one's authentic individuality. "To conform to custom merely as custom," says Mill, "does not educate or develop in [the individual] any of the distinctive qualities which are the . . . endowment of a human being." But as Dalrymple convincingly argues, Mill dangerously exaggerates the place of rationality in everyday life. To a certain extent, we really have no choice but to rely on prejudice (preconceived opinion) or external authority. I trust in the authority of my physician, for example, when he tells me that my cholesterol levels are much too high and that the problem must be treated in a particular way. Of course, I could choose to question his authority. I might object to his choice of treatments, having read up on the matter. But if I refuse the treatment he suggests, I rely on the authority of some other expert who has no doubt spent years of his life researching hyperlipidemia. Of course, someone might object, that may be true in scientific matters, but surely, in the moral sphere, things are different, especially since they involve the very essence of my sovereign individuality. If I rely on the authority of medical experts to prescribe my medications, that might be accepted without permanent damage to my *amour propre*; but if I rely in moral matters on the guidance of some preconceived body of opinion—say, the wisdom of my grandparents or the teachings of a church tradition—surely that compromises my selfhood in a radical way. Surely I am then a mere cipher, a nonentity, ripe for extermination in the name of the greater good!

Dalrymple's response to such arguments is both invigorating and less than fully satisfying. He admits, to be sure, that not all prejudices are equal. Some are clearly unworthy or unjust. Nor would he claim that a prejudice should never be subject to rational examination, yet he would assert that, even after an "unreasoning" prejudice is examined in the light of reason, it does not cease thereby to be a prejudice. He further recognizes clearly enough that the quest for an autonomous source of judgment within the self alone is a fool's errand. The individual who rejects the claims of a moral tradition inevitably turns to some other external authority—a peer group, a therapy group, a role model fabricated by Hollywood, the mass media. He simply swaps one prejudice for another. Of course, that same individual will persuade himself that his will in these matters is sovereign, while he fails to notice that his moral choices invariably serve the dictates of his libido, or his craving for security, or his longing for social recognition, or mere convenience. In short, the desire for moral autonomy leads to moral automatism.

Dalrymple does not pay nearly enough attention, however, to the problem faced by the individual in a society in which the erosion of moral traditions, of inherited bodies of prejudice or opinion, has left him to wander aimlessly in an ethical Potter's Field of shards and detritus that were once part of an intact tradition. Of course, Dalrymple is aware of the problem, but he seems incapable of, or unwilling to, face it squarely. While he is eloquent (and, at times, witty) about the necessity of prejudice and its role in perpetuating moral traditions, he is evidently reluctant to advocate any particular tradition. Yet if Western civilization has any hope of surviving its present malaise, of resisting not only further attrition of its vital substance from within but also the Islamic threat from without, it cannot do so without a massive renunciation of the false gods it now worships and a return to its specifically Christian foundation.

Among the most insightful of Dalrymple's arguments is his claim that the abolition of prejudice has totalitarian implications. It is perfectly obvious that, in the name of "equality," at least some prejudices

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must be suppressed. Racial prejudice is the paradigmatic prejudice of this sort. Thus, in the name of "equality of opportunity," we have codified into law all manner of prohibitions against racial discrimination (some of which are no doubt justified). In some cases, as in affirmative-action legislation, the law seems rigged to ensure not only equal opportunity but equal result. But, for the most part (here in America, anyway), we have resisted the kind of draconian measures that would be required to produce an absolute equality of outcome for all, regardless of race, creed, sex, or social class. We pride ourselves on the notion that "equality of opportunity" can happily coexist with individual initiative. But as Dalrymple notes, while "equality of outcome" would require authoritarian measures, "equality of opportunity" is potentially much more radical. For if the latter objective were to be realized fully, prejudice would have to be, not suppressed, but recalibrated through massive social engineering, to ensure that all share the same (presumably multicultural, feminist, anti-Christian) prejudices. "And to do this would require methods of the kind described in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*." Such an experiment

> would necessitate a totalitarian dictatorship more terrifyingly thoroughgoing than any yet seen. It would make the achievement of equality of outcome . . . seem like an exercise in liberty.

Despite his use of the conditional tense, Dalrymple is too well informed to imagine that the scenario he conjures lies merely in a possible Huxleyan future. Although he stops short of saying so, I suspect that the experiment has already begun.

For those who are unfamiliar with Dalrymple and his work, I should add that he is no armchair moralist. He is, to his credit, employed by no think tank, nor has he ever (to my knowledge) sought or acquired tenure in an academic setting. On the contrary, he is a retired physician (a psychiatrist) who treated patients for many years in a public hospital in Birmingham, England, as well as in a nearby prison. He draws heavily upon his personal experience, not only in the present work, but in his highly regarded *Life at the Bottom: The Worldview That Makes the Underclass* (2001) and, more recently, *Romancing Opiates: Pharmacological Lies and the Addiction Bureaucracy* (2006). In addition, he writes regularly for the *Spectator* as well as the *City Journal*.

Some may argue that Dalrymple (whose real name is Anthony Daniels) leans too heavily upon anecdotal, firsthand observation. (What, after all, could be more prejudicial?) But, as a social critic, he is also capable of rigorous argumentation, conveyed with an elegance and clarity, that is all too rare today. Even so, I expect that Dalrymple would make only modest claims for his own work, agreeing perhaps with H.L. Mencken that criticism is, after all, simply "prejudice made plausible." ©

SIXTH ANNUAL ABBEVILLE INSTITUTE SUMMER SCHOOL

"Northern Anti-Slavery Agitation"

St. Christopher Conference Center, Johns Island, SC • June 10-15, 2008

What motivated Northern anti-slavery agitation? Was it a moral determination to emancipate and integrate the African population as social and political equals? Since this captures our own moral outlook, we are tempted to read those inclinations into the "anti-slavery" language we find in history books.

But that is not how James DeWolf thought of the matter. DeWolf was an "anti-slavery" senator from Rhode Island, opposed to admitting Missouri as a slave state. He had been a world-class slave trader before the trade was outlawed in 1808. His family company ran over 80 voyages to Africa and sold slaves throughout the Western Hemisphere. DeWolf never had an "Amazing Grace" conversion. But if his "anti-slavery" position had no moral content, what was its meaning?

We will explore the main Northern anti-slavery critiques as they appeared in the Philadelphia Convention, the Louisiana Purchase, New England nullification of the War of 1812, the Abolition Petitions, the Missouri Compromise, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the agitation over allowing slavery in the West. To what extent did this agitation spring from a moral concern to emancipate and incorporate the African population, and to what extent did it display quite different motives?

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Dr. Donald Livingston
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Robert Frost: The Definitive Work

by Tom Landess

Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher
by Peter J. Stanlis
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books; 498 pp., $28.00

During much of the 20th century, Robert Frost was widely regarded as our greatest living poet. Yet the Frost poems that students used to read in college English classes were those more easily accessible: "Mending Wall," "Birches," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." Typically, the professor would spend a day or two on Frost, superficially noting the quaint, country metaphorical content of these works, and then move on to T.S. Eliot and spend the rest of the semester explicating "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Waste Land."

Thus, students were led to believe that Frost is "easier" than Eliot, less profound, and, therefore, less important. Indeed, the reverse is true. To understand and teach "Prufrock" and "The Waste Land," the professor had merely to read a handful of articles in learned journals, where a few perceptive critics discussed the cinematic structure of these works and noted their heavily ironic contempt for the modern world. Eliot delivered that cynical message in code; and teachers—with the unacknowledged help of a few critics—acted as decoders for bright-eyed freshmen longing to be world-weary.

No such definitive criticism existed for the works of Robert Frost, in large measure because the poems that didn't make it into textbooks were often too deep for ordinary Ph.D.'s to fathom without professional guidance. Peter Stanlis's new book, *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*, is that definitive work, the one from which English teachers could have cribbed a year's worth of lectures to instruct and dazzle their students.

Today, Frost and the philosophers who influenced him are regarded as relics of a repressive society by the deconstructionists, the latest academics to dumb down literary studies and make poetry the servant of ideology. For this and other reasons, some intelligent readers may come to the Stanlis book skeptically. Poets are not typically philosophers; and books about their "philosophy" are too often exercises in the making of mountains out of molehills—taking a single poem, a line, a phrase, and attaching an entire philosophical system to its tail. Frost, however, wrote philosophical poetry, grappling in verse with ontological and epistemological questions that had fascinated him since youth.

Stanlis boldly states his thesis at the beginning of Chapter 1:

> My subject is Robert Frost's philosophy, and my thesis is that dualism provides the whole basis of his total but unsystematic philosophical view of reality . . . Dualism as the basis of Frost's philosophy is the foremost single element that scholars and literary critics need to consider in any study of his life and thought, including the themes of his poetry.

Frost's youthful preoccupation with the conflict between philosophical and religious opposites may have grown out of his conversations with his mother, a deeply religious woman worried about her son's willingness to consider dangerous ideas. Following Frost's own ferocious rejection of the belief that a poet's works can be understood by studying his life, Stanlis touches briefly on this relationship between mother and son without involving his reader too deeply.

By the same token, Stanlis says that you can't deduce Frost's dualism merely by reading his poetry. Consequently, he adopts an eclectic approach to the purpose he hopes to accomplish, *viz.*, persuasive proof that dualism is the key to an understanding of everything about Frost—his poetry, his philosophy, his understanding of God, his social and political views.

In a succeeding chapter, Stanlis quotes Frost himself to show how the poet's understanding of metaphor reveals his essential dualism:

> Greatest of all attempts to say one thing in terms of another is the philosophical attempt to say matter in terms of spirit, or spirit in terms of matter to make the final unity. That is the greatest attempt that ever failed. We stop just short there. But it is the height of poetry, the height of all thinking, the height of all poetic thinking, that attempt to say matter in terms of spirit and spirit in terms of matter.

Stanlis might have rested his case there, particularly after quoting a sentence the poet wrote in a 1958 letter to Lawrance Thompson: "I am a dualist."

However, he goes on to discuss Frost's confrontation with a variety of conflicting views growing out of philosophy, religion, and aesthetics. In an early chapter, Stanlis shows how Frost the dualist tackles the theory of evolution. In fact, the poet managed to resolve the apparent conflict between Darwin and religion when he was a schoolboy. Thus, in 1892, he wrote: "You say, God made man of mud, and I think God made man of prepared mud." And in 1955, at Bread Loaf, he told an audience: "It doesn't make any great difference to give up saying that God made [man] out of mud. All you have to say is that God made him out of prepared mud—worked it up from animal life."

In another chapter, Stanlis highlights a running quarrel with "Three Generations of Huxleys," whom Frost regarded as monists and ideologues, evangelists for a religion of science that denied the validity of any other claim to truth, whether spiritual, aesthetic, or merely common sense. In discussing the idea of progress through science, championed so fervently by the Huxleys, Stanlis says,

> Frost denied that evolution and the scientific method and tech-

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> nology altered the moral, intellectual, aesthetic, or social nature of man. The traditional deadly sins, pride, envy, avarice, lust, gluttony and anger, which marked human depravity and spread crime throughout society, were as rampant in modern civilization as they had been in past ages.

In the 1920's, Frost spoke for a shrinking minority. By the end of the 20th century, most people would have agreed with him.

In perhaps the most adventurous chapter in the book, Stanlis finds a strong link between Albert Einstein's view of the universe and Robert Frost's dualism. After a careful and convincing analysis of Einstein's Theory of Relativity and his pious sense of wonder at the beauty of the universe, Stanlis writes:

> Frost's belief that science was one of the humanities, and not a self-sufficient and independent enterprise, led him to regard Einstein as an ideal example of what a scientist should be. The great physicist united his work in matter with adherence to the humanities, to the fictional aesthetics of art, and even to a belief in God.

During the course of this book, which is almost 500 pages long, Stanlis exhibits a breadth of knowledge and a depth of understanding that many older scholars have come to believe are extinct, like the passenger pigeon and virginity at marriage. He discusses Descartes, Lovejoy, contemporary politics, Marx, the Soviet Union, Frost's love/hate relationship with the Democratic Party, Irving Babbitt, Sir Philip Sidney, fascism, Newton, the Bible, Aristotle, Santayana (under whom Frost studied), William James, the United Nations, God, and Frost's reputation as the world's greatest conversationalist.

Unlike many formidable scholarly works, particularly those that deal with philosophical complexities, this study is a joy to read. It is full of anecdotes and Frost quotes and is rendered in the matter-of-fact language of true scholarship, which seeks to enlighten rather than to impress. In places, it demands a certain degree of heroism, the will to move on to the next page despite the merciless demands of the subject matter. But the next page is always worth the effort.

In summary, Peter Stanlis has written a book that meets the highest standards of literary scholarship and criticism. It has been long in coming. He published *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* in 1955, and it remains one of the best books ever written on Burke, just as this book—published some 52 years later—will be among the best ever written about Robert Frost. It is an inspiring achievement, entered into out of a fierce personal devotion to his friend rather than a desire for scholarly acclaim. Stanlis knows full well that the current crop of academics won't read his book. Most have never read Frost, in some cases never heard of him; and, if they have, they just couldn't care less. Ward Churchill would not and could not read this book.

Like Frost's poetry, Stanlis's *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher* was written for another time—for a past when the academy was dominated by scholars who knew everything they needed to know about their discipline, which, in literary studies, meant not only the great body of English and American poetry and prose, but also European and American history, Western philosophy, and the best scholarship. But the book was also written in the hope that, in some improbable future, when the current anti-intellectualism of the academy gives way to good sense and good taste, English professors will again teach Frost in the classroom and will find themselves in need of a good study that tells them what the mystery is all about. This is it.

Contributing editor Tom Landess is a retired English professor who has published a number of books and articles, a few of which have appeared under his name.

Mann of the West

by James O. Tate

Anthony Mann: New and Expanded Edition
by Jeanine Basinger
Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press; 215 pp., $27.95

An established authority on film, Professor Basinger has updated her monograph on the films of Anthony Mann for good reason. Not only has her original edition of 1979 long been out of print, it has been in much demand. This second edition of *Anthony Mann* will mean that a new generation of students of film, and of American film in particular, will again be indebted to her.

Anthony Mann (1907-67) is remembered today chiefly for his direction of Hollywood films in the 40's and the 50's—he did his best work from 1947 to 1958, in two cycles. Having learned his craft, he was a creative force in film noir, working with the great cinematographer John Alton, among others, in the production of B-movies that are cult objects today, the best of them being *Desperate* (1947), *T-Men* (1947), *Raw Deal* (1948), *Reign of Terror* (a.k.a. *The Black Book*, 1949), *Border Incident* (1949), and *Side Street* (1949). Basinger is brilliant on *Border Incident*, and perhaps that is the best of these movies. But nothing can erase the memory of the *outré Reign of Terror*, a cinematographically radical treatment of the French Revolution!

The two noirish Westerns that Mann made for MGM in 1950, *Devil's Doorway* and *The Furies*, were transitional works that took him in that year to *Winchester '73* and James Stewart, with whom he would make seven more films: the ones for which he is most widely remembered, and those that were instrumental in securing the career and image of Stewart, whom Andrew Sarris called "the most complete actor-personality in the American cinema." Anthony Mann and James Stewart in effect competed with

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John Ford and John Wayne, and Budd Boetticher and Randolph Scott, as these teams supplied in their different ways a glorious Indian summer for the Western in the 50's. *Winchester '73*, *Bend of the River* (1952), *The Naked Spur* (1953), *The Far Country* (1955), and *The Man from Laramie* (1955) are the Mann/Stewart Westerns, and they are quite a set. But Mann also made outstanding Westerns with other leading men: *The Last Frontier* (1955), with Victor Mature; *The Tin Star* (1957), with Henry Fonda; and *Man of the West* (1958), with Gary Cooper, as well as other films with Stewart that weren't Westerns. Of these, I will say only that Basinger's uncritical treatment of *Strategic Air Command* (1955) made me miss the contribution of Peter Biskind in his *Seeing Is Believing* (1983).

After the 50's, Mann seemed to pivot with the industry toward new trends. He still made good movies, such as *El Cid*, perhaps the best of its kind. But a heart attack took him away before he had established a new pattern, and before he received the recognition that would have led to greater documentation of his life and personality. Even so, Mann's reputation has grown over the years, and there is no other treatment of him that compares with the attention that Basinger has provided. And that is just the point.

Precisely because Mann left little in the way of materials and records, Basinger has been free, or forced, to treat his films in a formalist manner, and she makes no bones about it. "I still believe that it is bogus to approach a movie for any purpose without first understanding film as film." Seeing in Mann's career "a clear progression towards purity and simplification," she insists upon his achieved simplicity, holding it up as "an achievement . . . among the greatest in all of film." Seeing in his work "image wedded to idea," she insists upon the created fusion, the total image: "This means that Mann's work is crystal clear. What it says it is is what it is." And we could say something similar about Basinger's book.

I, for one, appreciate Jeanine Basinger's forthrightness, her ability and willingness to get to the point, her honesty, and her abstemious refusal of theoretical entanglement and the clotted gobbledygook that goes with it. Like most other fields in the liberal arts, film studies has been infested with ideological gnosticism and blighted by analysts who have preconceived conclusions to which they think films must fit, but Professor Basinger's memories of obsession, of a collision with film art, take us back to a time when we too could react and respond and analyze without a preset paradigm:

> It was 1953, and I was ushering at the local movie theater in Brookings, South Dakota. I watched *The Naked Spur* fifteen times in four days. What was initially an entertaining experience became a sobering experience and ultimately an overwhelming experience. The film's impact grew. On the fifteenth go-round, I was as much a set of exposed raw nerves as Jimmy Stewart himself, and my reactions to events were as shaky and psychotic as his. For the first time in which I was clearly aware of it, I did not identify with the female character in the film (Janet Leigh), but instead allied myself with Stewart. I seemed to have no choice in that matter. Why? . . . I'm still thinking about it. The attempt to figure it out forms the basis of this book on Mann's work.

Jeanine Basinger's fidelity to her own experience is not only a denial of feminist ideology but an affirmation of the power of film art. That energizing confrontation precipitated her career and this book, and we are the beneficiaries of the process. For one reason and another, "Anthony Mann" has come to mean his films, and the book on that topic has been written by Jeanine Basinger—a must-have for film buffs, Stewart fans, lovers of Westerns, film-noir fanatics, and indeed all students of film.

Contributing editor James O. Tate is a professor of English literature at Dowling College on Long Island.

Free No More

by Paul Craig Roberts

Day of Reckoning
by Patrick J. Buchanan
New York: Thomas Dunne Books; 304 pp., $25.95

In his latest book, *Day of Reckoning*, Pat Buchanan argues that hubris, ideology, and greed are among America's deadliest enemies. Hubris led to overreach. Hegemonic neoconservative ideology turned most of the world against the United States. And free trade has become a no-think cult that permits a greedy few to destroy America's economic position for their own gain.

Some of the information in *Day of Reckoning* will startle Americans. For example, hard-pressed states are selling off their toll roads to foreigners for up-front money. The Indiana toll road that connects the Ohio Turnpike to Chicago has been leased for 75 years to foreign companies. Foreigners have acquired 99-year leases on the Chicago Skyway, the Dulles Greenway in Northern Virginia, and the Pocahontas Parkway near Richmond, Virginia.

The gigantic U.S. trade deficit is financed by turning U.S. assets over to foreigners, who thereby acquire ownership of the future income flows from the assets—the profits, dividends, capital gains, interest, tolls, and rents—thus worsening the current-account deficit.

China and Japan control a couple of trillion dollars in U.S. assets between them, and sovereign wealth funds of energy producers, such as Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, control several trillion dollars more, a sum expanding with the price of oil, which the aggressive military policies of the Bush regime have driven from $30 to $100 per barrel.

The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority has acquired a chunk of Citicorp. China Investment Corporation has ten-percent ownership of Morgan Stanley. A Chinese bank has multibillion-dollar investments in Bear

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Stearns and the Blackstone Group. Middle Eastern financial organizations have acquired stakes in the London Stock Exchange and NASDAQ.

Most patriots have been convinced that the greatest problems we are facing are Islam, Muslim terrorists, civil libertarians, liberal judges, war protesters, and Bush critics such as Pat Buchanan. Buchanan shows that it is the foreign and domestic policies of the U.S. government that are making the United States increasingly vulnerable to foreign threats. Washington can no longer pay its bills, and the challenging economic times are just beginning. As the United States becomes more dependent on importing goods that she no longer produces herself, Social Security and Medicare are projected to rise from 40 percent of the federal budget to 75 percent over the next 20 years. Meanwhile, the Bush regime has squandered one trillion dollars on pointless aggression in the Middle East, which is of no benefit to America. The squandered money and the wars are entirely to America's harm. Can such self-destructive policies be reversed?

Buchanan seems to think that they could be, if Americans would wake up and if their elected representatives would put the country's interests first. Buchanan wants to believe in his fellow citizens and in his government, and he keeps writing books in an effort to rouse patriots to the defense of America.

What is missing from this book is an account of the destruction of the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and American liberty at the hands of the Bush regime. As bad as America's immigration, trade, and foreign policies are, the greatest threat to America's existence as a land of liberty is the police state that the Bush regime and Congress have put in place under the guise of the "War on Terror." It is a war in which Congress, the corporate media, and much of the federal judiciary joined with the Bush regime against American liberty.

Buchanan's description of America's plight leaves out the worst part of it. The Constitution is the basis for law. The demise of the Constitution—documented by Lawrence Stratton and me in *The Tyranny of Good Intentions* and by Judge Andrew Napolitano in *A Nation of Sheep*—leaves no basis for law except the raw power of the state. The raw power of the state is the edifice that the Bush regime, the neoconservatives, and the Federalist Society are building. The Constitution is being gutted in order to elevate executive power. And the excuse is the War on Terror.

It has become a prerogative of the executive branch to decide who is a terrorist, a decision that can be made without presenting evidence or charges to a court of law, that deprives the accused of legal representation and the protections of the Geneva Conventions, and that results in incarceration without trial.

As Judge Napolitano shows, this destruction of the foundations of liberty occurred with hardly a peep from the American people, Congress, bar associations, law schools, or the media. The Supreme Court has shown a slight inclination to impede some part of Bush's assault on civil liberties. The process is slow, however, and the Court's rulings are overturned with new unconstitutional legislation, requiring new cases that can claim the attention of the Court.

One more Republican appointee to the Supreme Court, and liberty will forever be dead in the United States.

The Bush regime has successfully ignored not only the U.S. Constitution and such federal statutes as the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), but public opinion as well. Bush has been able to get away with his power grabs and to escalate his war in Iraq despite the opposition of a majority of the public. In 2006, Americans replaced the spineless Republican majorities in the House and Senate with Democratic ones. Nothing changed. The war continued, more police-state legislation was passed, and Iran was set up for attack with resolutions passed by Congress.

Obviously, the U.S. government is no longer accountable to the American people.

Bush and Cheney are guilty of more impeachable offenses than all previous presidents and vice presidents combined. Yet, the Democratic Speaker of the House has declared that "impeachment is off the table."

Despite polls indicating the public's opposition to the Iraq war, both parties' candidates for president support continuing it, and many want to expand it to Iran. The two candidates who are against the war and for the Constitution, Ron Paul and Dennis Kucinich, have been excluded from debates. Americans have not rallied behind the leaders who would protect civil liberties and the Constitution. Indeed, the public gives Bush and Cheney increasingly low approval ratings, while casting votes for their clones in caucuses and primaries across the country.

We can blame the corporate media for misinforming the public—or that part of the public that still relies on the corporate media. But the disturbing fact remains that the American people show no capability of taking back their country through the electoral process. There is no indication that the November 2008 election will do anything to restore sanity in Washington or preserve liberty for our future. Americans have lost accountable government and are no longer a free people. Our day of reckoning has passed.

Paul Craig Roberts is a nationally syndicated columnist.

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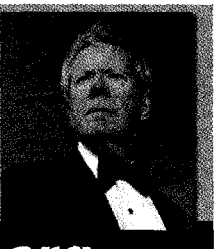
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by Philip Jenkins

The Country of the Blind

In the 1960's and 70's, when European countries were admitting large migrant populations from predominantly Muslim regions, Western governments had a powerful vested interest in encouraging the growth of politicized Islam of the straitest sect. European political attitudes were shaped absolutely by the Cold War confrontation, and the Middle East featured chiefly as a theater of East-West ideological rivalry. The nightmare was that Soviet-tied communists would establish themselves throughout the region, probably using secular socialist and nationalist parties as fronts, and that would place the vast oil resources in the hands of the Soviet bloc.

The primary danger seemed to be the modernizing nationalism of Nasserism, Ba'athism, or revolutionary socialism, the fashionable and exciting Middle Eastern ideologies of the day. Incidentally, many of these modernizing movements had a potent Christian element in their history and leadership. Christian intellectuals and militants were much in evidence both in Ba'athism and among the radical Palestinian guerrilla groups. To combat this threat, Western governments and intelligence agencies actively cooperated with the enemies of secular governments such as Nasser's Egypt or Ba'athist Syria and Iraq—the sponsors of all those pesky Christian terrorists—and that meant tolerating and allying with the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ikhwan. The Israelis tried to destabilize the leftists by promoting their own Palestinian Islamic faction, Hamas.

Internationally, the West saw conservative monarchies such as Saudi Arabia as its principal allies in the region and welcomed Saudi efforts to spread conservative varieties of Islam. In 1962, the Saudi government founded the World Muslim League as a means of financing mosques, preachers, and propaganda that reflected its particular form of Wahhabi Islam. As Islamist exiles fled to Europe in the 1950's, Western governments made no objection to them establishing mosques and institutional networks, which would serve as valuable foundations for later organization. Ikhwan leader Said Ramadan established the Munich mosque that would become the critical center of Islamist radicalism in Germany. Much has been written about the circumstances surrounding the creation of this institution in the early 1960's, and among the bewildering network of clandestine forces involved, we find U.S. and German intelligence agencies as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, and Muslim veterans of the Third Reich. Ramadan also founded the Islamic Society of Germany and was associated with the World Muslim League. His son Tariq Ramadan is today a controversial face of European Islam.

For Western governments, Islamization served a double benefit, combating the communist world internationally, but also providing a rival attraction for Muslim immigrants on their own soil. After all, very few of these came from cultures with any strong tradition of *usuliya* fundamentalism: For most, Islam rather meant the eclectic faith of the Sufi brotherhoods, which is anathema to strict Islamists such as the Wahhabis. Perhaps one fifth of the Turks arriving in Germany were Alevis, secularized and anticlerical members of a notionally Islamic sect that observes virtually none of the standard Muslim prohibitions and which retains odd vestiges of an ancient crypto-Christianity. Politically, ordinary immigrants were generally to the left, predictably, since it was the left-wing parties who supported them against nativist attacks.

From the 1980's, European governments permitted and encouraged the growth of foreign-derived and foreign-based Islamic organizations among their immigrants. While the

Saudis are famous for projecting their militant agenda, the governments of Algeria, Morocco, and Turkey have a vested interest in reducing dissident influences among their communities abroad. In turn, Western governments were happy to support such foreign dabbling as a means of preventing the upsurge of radicalism among immigrant communities. To accomplish their goal, foreign states and their ministries for religious affairs become closely involved in choosing the imams who teach in such mosques and prepare teaching material for children in religious schools. Thus, clergy are conspicuously the least assimilated members of many Muslim communities, and the most likely to have close foreign ties. They have provided the main pressure for women to don the veil and for children to secede from public schools. When European governments try to communicate with their Muslim minorities, they usually speak to the national federations that claim to represent those populations, but which in reality report to foreign governments and international radical movements. These federations represent the largest single obstacle to assimilation.

European states, then, accepted foreign immigration, but the radical Islamism was in large part their own creation. As good secularists, European politicians and bureaucrats knew that religion no longer mattered to any rational person; obviously, no harm could arise from exploiting religious loyalties among others. Just how much damage may arise from this blunder remains to be seen. ◁

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by Scott P. Richert

The Vanishing Middle (America)

The rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer, the politicians and pundits tell us every evening on the news. Lost in the rhetoric is any concern for members of the middle class, who are in danger of becoming nothing more than a footnote in future histories of the United States.

If England was once a nation of shopkeepers, the United States, in the mid-20th century, was a nation of small businessmen and white-collar workers—all, in their own way, decidedly middle class. Many in the working class, too, strove to afford the comforts of a middle-class lifestyle—and, even if they would never enter the middle class themselves, America's prosperity and educational opportunities held out the promise that their children might leave the working class behind.

To that end, they provided a home and schooling for growing families and looked forward to the day when they would make the final payment on their mortgage, followed a few years later by retirement, a gold watch, pension payments, and days of traveling and doting on grandchildren.

The fact that we cannot read such a description today without thinking it a wild oversimplification, even a caricature, tells us more about the decline of the prospects of the working class than all of the facts and figures economists and politicians can muster. Still, a few of those figures do fill out the picture. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly wage (adjusted for inflation) of American workers has risen only 36 cents per hour in 33 years, from $16.39 per hour in 1973 to $16.75 in 2006. By 2007, only 14 million Americans were still employed in manufacturing.

Today, of course, the average wage of those who hold the remaining jobs is declining, not rising (despite a near doubling of productivity since 1973). Those who cry, "Good riddance!" when multinational corporations with no loyalty to the country in which they are based transfer production (read: "jobs") overseas usually blame the decline of American manufacturing on unions that became so greedy they killed the golden goose. "Of course companies are seeking cheaper labor markets; they've been bled dry. Who could blame them?"

Who, indeed? Well, perhaps the employees who never unionized, who worked hand-in-hand with the management of family-owned factories before a new generation of owners, less interested in the businesses their families had built than in what the profits from those businesses could buy, brought in outside managers who presided over the mergers and acquisitions of the late 20th century that made their companies just divisions of some faceless multinational.

When most Americans think of manufacturing, they think of the auto industry, and so they cannot be blamed for their obsession with unions. But there's more to manufacturing than Ford, Chrysler, and GM; and throughout the industrial Midwest, most small manufacturers were not unionized. Yet somehow, they managed to pay their workers a living wage, and then some.

Today, after the loss of 20 percent of Rockford's manufacturing jobs since the election of George W. Bush, Rockford's median household income has slipped below the national median. And President Bush's generous offer of federal funds to retrain factory workers who lost an $18 per hour job to work in the "healthcare industry" (read: "empty bedpans at $9 per hour") isn't going to move that number in the right direction.

"The jobs are never coming back," presumptive Republican presidential nominee John McCain has told workers in Michigan, Ohio, South Carolina. Strangely, the countries to which multinationals are moving American jobs cannot absorb them quickly enough. They want more, and they want them now; they're not training (much less retraining) their workers for a "postindustrial economy."

McCain's platform promises funds to retrain "displaced" blue-collar workers for jobs in the "information economy"—good white-collar, middle-class jobs. In an ideal world, that would be a step up; but for Americans, the information-economy bubble burst some time ago. Former Fed Vice Chairman Alan S. Blinder, one of the chief supporters of NAFTA when he served on President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors and still a strong supporter of globalization, estimates that 29 to 38 million more American jobs are "offshorable" in the near future. Most of those, he claims, are not in manufacturing but in the very "information economy" fields that McCain believes represent the future of American jobs.

The very fact that such jobs pay better than the national average makes them prime targets for "offshoring." In the March-April 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Blinder compares the disruptive effects of the coming exodus of jobs with those of the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution, of course, made the rise of a broad middle class possible, but it also gave us the first urban underclass and the first *nouveaux-riches*.

This time around, we can see the ranks of the new underclass swelling, as the new-new rich drive the transformation. If a new middle class is being created, however, it must be somewhere "offshore." ◁

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Letter From Britain

by Christie Davies

The British Empire and the Muslims

Last year in England, we marked the 60th anniversary of the voluntary granting of independence to India and Pakistan; it was also the year in which our military began to leave Iraq. Soon, the last of the British troops will march out of Basra with their band dolefully playing "The World Turned Upside Down."

Iraq has bad associations for the British. We were badly defeated at Kut-al-Amara, halfway between Basra and Baghdad, during World War I, and the Turkish victors treated their British and Indian prisoners abominably. Any Christian Armenian will tell you exactly how the Muslim Turks behaved when they held the upper hand. After World War I, Britain ruled Mesopotamia under a League of Nations mandate until the early 1930's. Sunnis and Shiites united against the British in the rebellion of 1920. In World War II, a coup in Iraq put pro-Nazi elements in charge, and there were pogroms against the Jews. The British had to drive them out by force for fear that Nazi reinforcements would arrive through Germany's French ally, Vichy-controlled Syria. Later, the British had to use Kurdish troops to protect the Jews in Baghdad from mob violence. After the failure of the Franco-British military intervention in Suez in 1956 (resulting from American opposition), similar nationalist elements in the Iraqi military staged another coup in 1958 and killed the king and the pro-British monarchist politicians.

In short, we have bad memories of Iraq and of U.S. policy in the region. If Prime Minister Tony Blair had not shamelessly lied to us about weapons of mass destruction, there would have been no support here for the Anglo-American neocon invasion.

We also have bad memories of the partition of Imperial India into India and Pakistan in 1947, when half a million were murdered and 14 million had to flee their homes. The British Empire had provided India with an unusually lengthy period of peace and stability. Past imperial British rule is the main reason that India became and remains the only lasting parliamentary democracy in a region marked by dictatorships and bitter ethnic and religious clashes. Indeed, the British failed the Indian subcontinent not by their mode of ruling it but by leaving too quickly. The partition of the country between secular-but-Hindu-majority India and explicitly Islamic Pakistan was a disaster. British policy there was shameful, though Britain was in such a weakened position after World War II that she could do but little to stop the conflict. She had already been unable to contain the well-organized Muslim rioters who, with the full support of local Muslim League politicians, viciously attacked Calcutta's Hindus in 1946. Nonetheless, the feeble and anti-imperial Labour government in London and its royal stooge, the Viceroy Mountbatten, were much to blame.

The British media's coverage of the anniversary of partition included much liberal hand-wringing, as if this had been a case of divide and rule and not, as it really was, quit and divide. What has been conspicuously absent is any attempt to place the blame where it belongs—on the Muslims who insisted on seceding to form a purely Muslim state. The tabloid press in Britain is critical of the Muslims, but the government and the broadcasters go out of their way to appease them—partly out of fear of more Muslim terrorism in Britain, and partly because of the politically correct doctrine that you must not upset a querulous minority, however much it is in the wrong. The broadcasters regularly and gratuitously insult Christians, but they always appease the Muslims.

The line taken on the 60th anniversary of partition was that both sides were in some measure to blame. Of course, all the interviews with Hindus and Sikhs shown were either with militant Sikhs who recounted how much they had enjoyed using their swords to kill their Muslim neighbors or with Hindu and Sikh secular liberals who were happy to accept all of the blame. The Muslims, by contrast, were interviewed only as victims, and there were no Muslim apologies. But then, when have Muslims ever apologized for anything?

One question was never asked: Why was Pakistan ever created, when the Hindus wanted a united, politically secular India? The answer is that Muslims are unwilling to live as a minority in a plural or secular society. They are convinced of their own superiority in all things and stubbornly refuse to adjust. Rather than seeking to secure equal rights and opportunities, when the British began to introduce liberal democracy in India, the Muslims opted for segregation. First, they insisted on dividing the country into a patchwork of tiny ghettos and cantons according to local religious allegiance; then, they demanded a separate state defined entirely in terms of religion. This should have served as a warning to the governments of Europe as to how Muslim immigrants would behave in the years to come.

Likewise, no one asks why it is that, in non-Western countries as diverse as the Philippines, Thailand, Nigeria, and Sudan, Muslims take up arms against a non-Muslim majority or a substantial neighbor. Because Muslims are intolerant and discriminate against non-Muslim minorities when they are in control, as in Malaysia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, they cannot understand that others are capable of better behavior. Muslims make bad minorities because they make tyrannical majorities. The problem is not just that they

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think theirs is the only true religion and other religions are either wicked idolatry (such as Hinduism) or inferior (such as Christianity or Judaism), for many true believers in other religions also think that way. The difference is that Muslims make this belief the cornerstone of their politics and of their social interaction with others. Not all Muslims do this, and there are some Christians and Hindus who do, but that is beside the point. The majority of Muslims have a strong tendency in that direction, whereas it is a political outlook that most Christians and Hindus have abandoned. That is why most of the people in the world who live in stable democracies have a religious tradition that is Christian, Jewish, Hindu, or Buddhist. When totalitarianism has come to Christian countries such as Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia, the regimes have been secular and hostile toward religion.

By contrast, there are very few stable, democratic Muslim countries, and it is farcical of liberals and neocons to think they can change this situation by means of political pressure, exhortation, or the withholding of economic and military assistance. They are fools; their worst foolishness so far has been the Iraq war, which is why the British have now decided to cut and run. The best that can be hoped for in any Muslim country is a relatively mild autocracy that does not make Islam its central ideology and which does not have ambitions to expand. Atatürk, the shah, Sadat, the Gulf sheiks, the sultan of Oman, and other traditional, autocratic, or military rulers must be accepted. When neocons connive at their overthrow, they invite something worse, something fanatically Islamic and oppressive. Benazir Bhutto was protected by President Musharraf, who was willing to compromise with her party, but she was murdered by Islamic militants. If the Americans and the British press clumsily for democracy in Pakistan the way they did in Iran under the shah, it will end in an Islamic tyranny far worse than the previous autocratic government. Ayatollah Khomeini was Jimmy Carter's legacy.

The very idea of Pakistan was a mistake. The country existed in two segments that were thousands of miles apart—one in the west, and the other in Bengal. The people had nothing in common except their religion. Whereas India, a very diverse country in terms of religions, languages, and castes, has—if at times creakily—held together, Pakistan, in its first incarnation, ended in a very nasty civil war, with the Bangladeshis rising up against their oppressors from West Pakistan. In the end, the Indian army had to intervene to liberate Bangladesh, partly because the Pakistani air force was attacking Bengali guerrillas hiding across the border in India, and partly because a large part of the Bengali Hindu minority living in Bangladesh were being driven out into West Bengal in India. It was partition-style violence all over again, and it was entirely caused by Muslims. The Hindus were blameless.

The British media never reminded us that entire communities of Hindus living in areas of Pakistan such as Sind, who would have remained as loyal if not entirely happy citizens of Pakistan, were wantonly driven out, so that very few Hindus remain in (West) Pakistan. In 1947, they were nearly one quarter of the population; today, a mere two percent. By contrast, there are still 150 million Muslims living in India, making up 15 percent of the population, and they have the same rights and opportunities as other Indian citizens, including Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsees as well as Hindus. The Muslims are often not trusted in India and do not get their share of government jobs, but this is because many of them are still loyal to Pakistan. Indeed, when I was in India in 1973-74 after the liberation of Bangladesh by the Indian army, Delhi Muslims told me that they had wanted Pakistan to win. Hindus in Muslim countries merely want to be left alone and to succeed economically. India's Muslims can only dream of the days when their ancestors came to India as conquerors, or converted and collaborated with the conqueror. They cannot get used to a world in which they no longer rule; it was difficult enough

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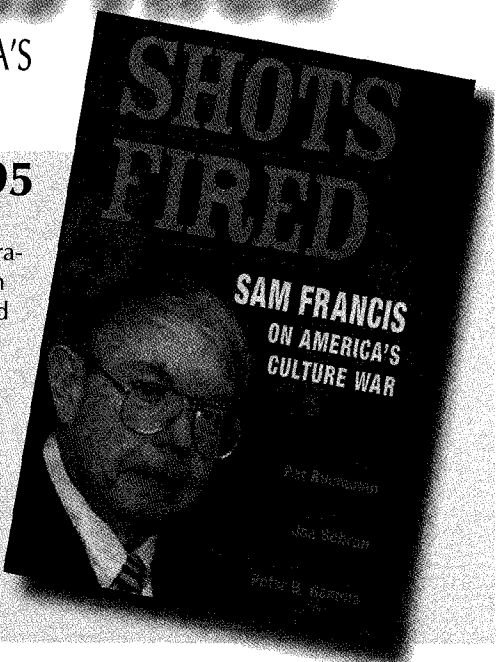

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for the Muslims to accept government by the British, who, in their policy of indirect rule, left many local Muslim princes in place, but it is anathema to them to live in a country where the dominant majority consists of Hindus, whom they regard as idol-worshiping *kafirs*. Yet there is considerable illegal migration from Muslim Bangladesh to Kolkata (Calcutta) in Indian Bengal. As with illegal Muslim migrants to Britain, they want to have all the social and economic benefits of a society that they could not create or sustain themselves. For all their grumbling and protesting and self-imposed segregation, very few Muslims ever leave India or Britain to live in Pakistan or Bangladesh.

Not surprisingly, there have been very few Muslim-Hindu clashes in West Pakistan, largely because there are no Hindus left. Centuries before the British came to rule India, the Muslims had slaughtered many of India's Hindus who failed to convert. This, in turn, gave rise to Sikhism, a warrior religion dedicated to resisting Muslim aggression. It is hardly surprising that the Sikhs were strongly involved in the fighting in the Punjab at the time of partition. The British broadcasters were careful to make note of Sikh violence against Muslims, but they failed to recall that Muslim mobs accosted Sikhs, setting fire to their beards.

The Muslim-Hindu clashes in India under the British and in the Republic of India tend to follow a pattern. The Muslims deliberately provoke the Hindus—they cast stones at a Hindu religious procession, or they fortify a mosque and tell the Hindus they intend to slaughter a cow. Massive fighting ensues. Then, in the end, the Muslims suffer greater losses because the Hindus are more numerous. At this point, the British broadcasters play to their Muslim audience at home by condemning the Hindu "aggressor," much as they do when the well-organized Israelis retaliate against an act of Palestinian terrorism. The Muslims do not control British broadcasting, but they might as well. What is never reported either on television or in the British press is that these clashes in India are often followed by arson and vandalism against Hindu temples in Britain. The perpetrators are rarely caught (though, in one case, a Muslim was prosecuted), and the pretense is kept up that native "racists" may have done it. The statistical correlation of communal clashes in India being closely followed by attacks in Britain indicates that the Muslims were responsible, just as they often attack Jews and synagogues not just in Britain but throughout Western Europe. They have even started to vandalize Christian churches in the north of England. These nasty truths are kept secret and even denied in the name of "good community relations"—that combination of pusillanimity and political correctness that has paralysed Europe.

We can now see how the reporting of the past is conditioned by the biases and cowardice of the present. Britain's loyal and peaceable Hindu and Sikh minorities get more than their fair share of the blame for what has happened in India—then and now—whereas the Muslims, who complain incessantly about negative stories in the newspapers about their doings at home and abroad, are treated far better than they deserve. The presentation of Indian history is shaped by the terrorism that has intensified in Britain since the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. Hence, British forces are pulling out of their sector around Basra, ceding control not to democratic forces but to Shiite militias. It won't do us much good at home, however, since the British Muslims are nearly all Sunnis who have a history of attacking Shiites in the Indian subcontinent. When the Shiites in Iraq start killing the Sunnis again, the British Muslims will blame us for leaving, just as they blamed us for going in in the first place. For British Muslims, even Muslim sectarian violence is somehow the fault of the British and the Americans; then again, in light of the neocons' naive assumption that such sectarian violence was not inevitable, they may have a point. In Britain, liberals and neocons alike, who have completely abandoned their own religions and historic traditions, are quite unable to understand, let alone deal with, a group such as the Muslims, who cling to theirs with an irrational ferocity.

Christie Davies is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain *(Transaction).*

Letter From Poland

by Mark Wegierski

The Media's Triumph Won't Last Forever

After the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2005, Poland finally appeared to have recovered from her postcommunist malaise, having brought a coalition of center-right and patriotic parties to power. These included the Law and Justice Party (PiS), led by the twin Kaczynski brothers, Lech and Jarosław; the ultra-Catholic League of Polish Families (LPR), led by Roman Giertych; and the populist Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland Party (Samoobrona), led by Andrzej Lepper. Lech Kaczynski won the presidency.

The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)—which had held the presidency from 1995 to 2005 and had mostly dominated the parliament since communism's end in 1989—was reduced to a relatively small number of MPs. At the same time, the Civic Platform (PO), a centrist, neoliberal party led by Donald Tusk, surged in the 2005 election.

Given these changes, there had been some hope that the new president and parliament would finally begin to dismantle the vast media, state, cultural, and economic infrastructures that the "postcommunists" had created for themselves under the permissive hand of President Lech Wałesa (1990-95). Today, many Polish patriots consider Wałesa a betrayer of the national renewal promised by the original Solidarity independent trade-union

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movement of 1980-81. Antiglobalization writer Naomi Klein has identified the situation of Poland in the 1990's as part of "disaster capitalism"—without pinpointing the precise provenance of that catastrophe.

The elections of 2005 had barely ended when Poland's mainstream media—led by Adam Michnik's *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland's largest and most profitable daily—began a ferocious campaign of invective against the new government. At the same time, forces from within the E.U. bureaucracy were waging a cultural war against Poland. Polish patriotism, precisely because of its temperate, humane character and its sterling record, had to be neutralized. It served as too viable an alternative to the newly emerging, hypercentralized E.U. superstate. Indeed, the Polish emphasis on the critical importance of national sovereignty hearkened back to the European Union's predecessor, the European Community—"a union of sovereign states." Many Poles do not need to be reminded that, in modern times, the lack of a sovereign Polish state has spelled disaster.

Despite the hostile climate created by the media, the PiS held a coalition government with the LPR and Self-Defense. Roman Giertych was named minister of education—a huge concession to someone commonly considered to be of the far right. This new solidarity would not last, however. Both Giertych and Andrzej Lepper would soon succumb to some stereotypical Polish vices, the same ones that played a considerable role in bringing down the old Polish First Republic: *warcholstwo* (sowing discord) and *prywata* (elevating self-interest over the commonweal). And to make matters worse, the resulting withdrawal of Giertych and Lepper from the PiS coalition was, on the face of it, so truly artless that one has to wonder whether the postcommunist neonomenklatura had a hand in it.

After the coalition collapsed, an election was called for October 21 of last year. At this, the media and cultural infrastructures turned with even greater fury against "the twins." In the ensuing election, the Civic Platform Party was painted as the savior of Poland from the "dangerous nationalism" of the Kaczynski brothers—who were scheming to introduce a "fascist dictatorship." The PO won the election with about 41 percent of the vote. The PiS received about 32 percent; the postcommunists, about 13 percent; and the Polish Peasants' Party (or the Polish People's Party, PSL) received about 9 percent of the vote. Self-Defense garnered only 1.5 percent, and the LPR (which had entered into a coalition with a small, ultra-libertarian party) received about 1.3 percent. Neither Samoobrona nor LPR met the five-percent threshold to retain seats in the Sejm (the lower house). Lech Kaczynski's presidential term will end in 2010.

Despite what appeared to be a groundswell of public interest in the campaign, as many as 45 percent of eligible voters did not cast a ballot in the election. This low level of participation has been the norm in recent Polish elections. Large numbers of people may simply be too disenchanted with the system to bother voting. And this time, the Kaczynski brothers were unable to capture the attention of the country's large rural population, which could have overwhelmed the votes of the mostly urban electorate of the PO.

Many members of the PO take a left-liberal approach to Polish historical and national questions, and there appears to be a massive, ongoing purge of many traditionalists whom the PiS coalition might have brought into the state apparatus, especially in the diplomatic corps, where they are sorely needed. Since 1989, there have been frequent complaints from Polish communities outside of Poland about the inability of the Polish diplomatic service to mount a serious and concerted response to the negative stereotypes of Poles and misrepresentations of Polish history so often found (for instance) in the United States and Canada.

The current government was at least successful in its efforts to pressure FOX TV to apologize for airing anti-Polish slander on its November 14, 2007, broadcast of the sitcom *Back to You*. (One character cracked, "It's in your Polish blood, like kielbasa and collaborating with the Nazis.") Moreover, relations with both Germany and Russia have markedly improved, and, in general, there is a growing sense of peace and stability in Poland.

Despite the patriotic right's distrust of liberal and left-wing political parties and coalitions, it may be able to find at least some allies in each of the Polish parties who share a sense of patriotism and see themselves as working through different channels toward the same goals. The political affiliations of some are based primarily on negative feelings about the Catholic hierarchy or certain aspects of Catholic dogma; such affiliations, then, do not necessarily reflect a general hostility toward Poland's historic national identity. The left is more independent in Poland than in most other European countries. The same cannot be said of the Polish media, which regularly attacks not only those whom it perceives to be associated with the political right but the very concept of Polish nationalism.

By and large, the media in Western Europe and North America follow a similar pattern. By contrast, when it comes to government policies that promote nationalism in Russia, the same media often give Vladimir Putin a free pass. Certainly, if the Kaczynski brothers had attempted even a small number of the measures that Putin is putting into place in Russia, they would have been denounced as Nazis throughout the European Union.

Now more than ever before, given the pressures from without and from within, Poland is in desperate need of some truly sagacious thinkers, leaders, and statesmen to defend her against the forces of centralization and deracination that would rob her of her heritage.

Mark Wegierski was born of Polish-immigrant parents in Toronto, Ontario. His writing has appeared in Canadian, American, Polish, British, and German publications.

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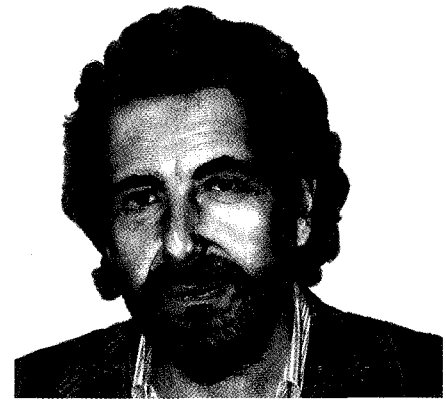
by Andrei Navrozov

Lobar Warming



Scoffers may deride the proposition I find instinctively plausible, that the consonants and the vowels of speech are its masculine and feminine constituents, though the same scoffers would not think to keep a professor from speaking of male rhymes or an electrician of female plugs. Yet the role of women in many societies, historically considered, is reminiscent of the function of vowels, which are there to enliven a word rather than to carry the burden of its meaning.

In some languages unrelated to ours, such as Hebrew or Arabic, many of the spoken vowels are merely hinted at in transcription, as if femininity were a crossword puzzle which the wise can solve using certain clues. But in our languages, too, when in the course of a phoneme's Indo-European migration a consonant mutates, this is big news for etymologists, with a whole new Law to go with it and a celebratory picnic on the outskirts of Marburg in honor of the jolly good fellow Jakob Grimm; yet the defloration of an alien vowel, in a word's transition from one language to another, hardly draws notice. On other occasions in this space, I have likened women to sacramental wine, to Roman spectacles, to tantalizing mirages; may this fresh flight of fancy be forgiven me.

Everybody knows the *mauvais quart d'heure* occasioned by the interaction of recognized beauty and presumptive brain. Of the five or six people who have been invited to the talk-show studio, two or three are academic graybeards; perhaps two are actresses, in delectable décolleté and elfin jewelry; and then the invariant joker in the deck, the woman. She may be a teacher, a politician, or a banker—that is of scarce importance; what is important, and what the organizers, the participants, and the spectators all secretly know is important, is that the woman has been asked on the show because she is a woman, a synthetic alternative and a foil to the potbellied masculine, on the one hand, and to the flagrantly feminine, on the other. She is a kind of golden mean, a vital sign of the civilization as it would like to be depicted on the cover of an annual report to the shareholders.

She may not actually be dramatically ugly, though that is hardly the point. The point is that she is there as the omphalos of the civilized world; inelegant, protruding, scarcely aware that, in their biologically attentive heart of hearts, the distracted listeners feel her to be an aberrant presence remarkable only for the intensity of their culturally suppressed contempt. She may speak wise words, and certainly what she says is seldom less wise than what is proffered by the graybeards; she may blab silly things, which nine times out of ten are as inane as the preening chirrup of the femmes fatales; but no matter what she says, it is her heart-rendingly unfair position as a vowel in place of the consonant that will determine the final meaning of the utterance.

Both the inevitable outcome and the basic hopelessness of the woman's predicament stem from her having been taken in by the culture's cardsharps, played for a fool, used for sport. She is the patsy neutered in a game of three-card monte, lured to the soapbox by professions of equal opportunity and cries of *bon chance*, who walks away without understanding what it was that's hit 'im. All round, bystanders smile, or wince, or else offer sympathy and wish him better luck next time; but deep down, they all know the truth, that he's ridiculous and a loser and that's all there is to it.

A man who prowls the perfumed purlieus of the feminine may not be to every woman's taste, in the very worst case an anomaly, evoking Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* and the dawn of clinical psychiatry of the 1890's. Indeed, such a man may expect to be derided by members of his own sex, a fact to which a wide variety of schoolyard insults bears witness; but such a man is almost never regarded by women with the contempt reserved for his opposite number, a woman foolhardy enough to trespass among men; never more profound than when she does so in the realm of social appearances, in a misguided pursuit of social acclaim, because if a Polish bluestocking wants to discover radium, or a New England spinster to beat the pants off the Metaphysical Poets, that's their own private affair.

This does not necessarily mean that women are generally more tolerant, or better than men at countenancing transgression; merely that the consonance of human life is more broadly functional than the assonance. One may well use an ornamental dagger to open a bottle of beer, yet one would balk at the thought of using a scarf of embroidered organza to tie up an apple-laden bough.

Should a woman of the south, clad in nothing but the silk of her mulierity, trespass on the hard, wheat-farming north, she would seem out of place and everybody would point. "'Twas in vain you swathed in sable your nightingale throat," as a Russian poet said of an Italian diva who had died of pneumonia in St. Petersburg. But if a northerner were to arrive in the almond-scented south, all he would need do to fit in with its boudoir warmth is to lose the uncool wolf-hide hat, the squirrel-fur gloves, and the ancestral bearskin. And what if he keeps them on? Well, that's fine, too. *Par kostei ne lomit*, goes the Russian proverb—warmth breaks no bones. ◁

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Kosovo Crisis Becomes Global

The unilateral declaration of independence by the Albanian leadership in Kosovo on February 17, and the subsequent recognition of the new entity by the United States and most E.U. countries, crowned a decade and a half of iniquitous U.S. policy in the former Yugoslavia. By recognizing "Kosova," the White House has made a great leap into the unknown—one that is comparable to Austria's July 1914 ultimatum to Serbia. The result will be equally devastating.

Aiding and abetting Muslim designs in the Balkans, in the hope that this will earn us some credit in the Islamic world, has been a major goal of U.S. policy in the region since at least 1992. The failure of this policy to yield any dividends has only prompted its architects to redouble their efforts, as Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns proved on February 18, a day after Kosovo declared independence. Noting early recognitions of Kosovo by Turkey and Afghanistan and "a very strong and supportive comment by the Organization of the Islamic Conference," he reminded his audience that

> Kosovo is going to be a vastly majority Muslim state, given the fact that 92 to 94 percent of their population is Muslim. And we think it is a very positive step that this Muslim state, Muslim majority state, has been created today. It's a stable—we think it's going to be a stable state.

If Washington thinks it "a very positive step" for a "vastly Muslim state" to be created on European soil that has been ethnically cleansed of non-Muslims and is filled with the smoldering ruins of Christian churches and monasteries, it stands to reason that Washington will be equally supportive of an independent Sanjak that would connect Kosovo with Bosnia, or of any putative Islamistan from western Macedonia to southern Bulgaria to the northern Caucasus.

It is worth noting that the Organization of the Islamic Conference statement, to which the State Department referred so approvingly, declared that "There is no doubt that the independence of Kosovo will be an asset to the Muslim world and further enhance the joint Islamic action."

Far from providing a model of pro-Western "Islam Lite," Kosovo is already the breeding ground for hard-line Islamists who have built 300 mosques during the past nine years of NATO occupation, mostly with Saudi money. Kosovo is visibly morphing from part of Europe into part of the Middle East. In the end, as former ambassador John Bolton predicts, "Kosovo will be a weak state susceptible to radical Islamist influence from outside the region . . . a potential gate for radicalism to enter Europe," and a stepping stone toward an anti-Christian, anti-American "Eurabia."

Instead of enhancing regional stability, this will encourage two distinct but interconnected trends: Greater Albanian aspirations toward Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, and rump-Serbia; and pan-Islamic agitation for the completion of the Green Corridor—an Islamic belt anchored in Asia Minor and extending across the Balkans into the heart of Central Europe.

"[W]e don't see the independence of Kosovo as some kind of precedent," Burns reiterated on February 18, but ethno-religious separatists around the world were quick to challenge his assertion. Pandora's box is wide open, and Israel may be among the first to feel the consequences.

The Palestinians "should follow Kosovo's example and unilaterally declare independence" if peace talks with Israel fail, Yasser Abed Rabbo, a top aide to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas declared on February 20. "Kosovo is not better than Palestine," he added. If the United States and the majority of the European Union "have embraced the independence of Kosovo, why shouldn't this happen with Palestine as well?"

Dr. Rice, Mr. Burns, *et al.* would reply "because we say so," but Israeli analysts are not impressed. Col. Shaul Shay, an expert on Islam at the Begin-Sadat Center at Bar-Ilan, notes that, when the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended, terrorist infrastructures remained there and served as a base for Islamic terror activities in Kosovo:

> Today, the Balkans serve as a forefront on European soil for Islamic terror organizations, which exploit this area to promote their activities in Western Europe, and other focal points worldwide . . . Islamic penetration into Europe through the Balkans is one of the main achievements of Islam in the twentieth century.

The primary danger, as some Israelis see it, is that the U.S. recognition of Kosovo endorses the principle that a solution to an intractable political and territorial quarrel can and should be imposed by outside countries, even if one of the parties rejects the proposed solution as contrary to its vital national interests. While Israel's future accommodation of Palestinian aspirations remains an open question, the notion of a solution imposed from outside is anathema. Applied to Israel, that principle might affect not just the West Bank but even Galilee and the Negev, where Arabs have, or

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may eventually acquire, local majorities. Israel's Muslim population is just above 20 percent, roughly the same as Serbia's with Kosovo included. If Albanian Muslims can demand separation from Serbia today, citing alleged past mistreatment, Israel's Arabs will do the same tomorrow.

Alarm bells are ringing in India, too. Five days after my colleagues and I enjoyed his hospitality at the Centre for Policy Research in Delhi, of which he is director, Bharat Karnad wrote in the *Wall Street Journal India* (February 19) that "one can never tell when the self-serving American approach against Serbia . . . will be transferred to Kashmir."

> Kosovo can easily become the precedent for breaking up other countries that have inherent diversities ending in, say, a Muslim Mindanao separated from the Christian Philippines, the Muslim state of Patani in the southern part of Buddhist Thailand, etc. Or indeed Kashmir, if not as part of Pakistan, then conjoined to the Pakistani portion of Kashmir, as an independent state . . . firmly in Washington's geostrategic grasp.

The principle on which Kosovo is founded is antithetical to an inclusive democracy such as India, he concludes:

> Messrs Thaci, Cheku & Co. are rogues leading a pariah state they have obtained by the foulest means. Kosovo is already emerging as the "crime central" and the Al Qaeda HQ in Europe, a haven for rabid Islamists, international terrorists, drug peddlers and gun-runners. . . . In the coming years, Nato members will have plenty to curse the US for, even as the Americans decamp leaving, as they always do, a mess for others to clean up.

The mess is spreading far and wide. China warned the United States that recognition of Kosovo would "constitute a serious challenge to the fundamental principles of international law." Taiwan's government welcomed the move, drawing a quick rebuke from China and causing fresh tension between Beijing and Washington.

South Ossetia and Abkhazia, pro-Russian breakaway provinces of NATO candidate Georgia, cited Kosovo as strengthening their case for recognition. South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity said the two territories had "more political, legal and historical grounds for claiming sovereignty" than Kosovo does.

The government of Transdniestra, a Russian-speaking self-governing region within the borders of Moldova, hailed Kosovo as "a new model for conflict settlement" leading to the international endorsement of Transdniestra's 17 years of *de facto* independence. In reply, Moldova—which normally counts on U.S. support in resisting separatist demands—declared Kosovo's action illegal.

Another would-be ally in the former Soviet Union, Muslim Azerbaijan, flatly rejected Kosovo's independence announcement, while the foreign minister of the (Christian Armenian) Nagorno-Karabakh administration said he was confident Kosovo's recognition would strengthen his people's position.

Spain also deemed Kosovo's declaration illegal, and as of this writing, the European Union is far from united, with at least a dozen member-countries withholding recognition for reasons of principle as well as self-interest.

The bad news is that, contrary to Mr. Burns' expectation of "a period of stability," U.S. policy has destabilized the Balkans and divided the world. The good news is that the polarization will finally debunk the myth of the "international community." If roughly half of all sovereign states, accounting for more than two thirds of the world's population, are not on board with the United States on this issue, the result will be a long-overdue and welcome loss of face and credibility by the global-hegemonist "foreign-policy community" inside the Beltway.

The flames in the U.S. embassy in Belgrade were easy to put out, but Serbian anger is deep, and the people's resentment of America, abiding. President Boris Tadic's narrow victory (51 percent) in the second round of the presidential election on February 3 was entirely the fruit of his claim that, as a pro-Western reformist, he could obtain less brutal treatment for Serbia from Brussels and Washington than his "nationalist" opponent. But Mr. Burns misinterpreted his victory as a sign that the Serbs were throwing in the towel. Instead, Tadic's victory was the last chance for the United States and the European Union to stop the train wreck. The Serbs' anger against both will now translate into a well-deserved electoral demise for Tadic's Democratic Party at the next parliamentary election, which is imminent.

Kosovo will linger on for a few years—an expensive albatross hung about the necks of American and European taxpayers, who will spend a few billion on it per year. It will continue developing, not as a functional economy but as a black hole of criminality and terrorism. The ever-rising and constantly unfulfilled expectations of its unemployable multitudes will eventually turn the monster against its maker. There will be many Fort Dixes to come, over there and at home.

In the end, the U.S.-led Kosovo policy will prove to be a blessing in disguise for Serbia. Only by not joining the European Union or NATO can she preserve her identity, her traditions, and her faith. Only by forging a strong alliance with a resurgent and still recognizably European Russia will Serbia avoid the clutches of a postmodern American Empire devoid of a single redeeming feature.

God works in mysterious ways. Kosovo remained Serbian during five long centuries of Ottoman darkness, to be liberated in 1912. It is no less Serbian now, the ugly farce in Pristina notwithstanding. It will be tangibly Serbian again, when the current experiment in Benevolent Global Hegemony collapses and when the very names of its current leaders are consigned to the recycle bin of history.

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THE OLD REPUBLIC

Lincoln, Diplomacy, and War

by Joseph E. Fallon

In the tumultuous six months between his election in November 1860 and the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861, Abraham Lincoln rejected all diplomatic efforts to resolve the deepening crisis peacefully. In the political dispute with the newly constituted, but militarily weak, Confederate States of America, there would be no meaningful negotiations. No compromise would be offered or accepted. Instead, tensions between the two governments would be heightened, and the passions of the American public inflamed, by Lincoln's provocative and deceptive rhetoric.

Lincoln's words were a reflection of his unflagging desire to wage total war on the South. It was to be a war that would last until the enemy agreed to unconditional surrender and U.S. public officials and private contractors had made a financial killing. In 1878, Henry S. Olcott, special investigator for the U.S. War and Navy Departments, estimated "at least twenty, if not twenty-five, percent of the entire expenditures of the government during the Rebellion, were tainted with fraud." We could call this the Lincoln principle of diplomacy—a principle that was followed by the Clinton administration in Bosnia and the George W. Bush administration in Iraq.

Lincoln's ideological view of politics equated progress and patriotism with support for a high protective tariff, internal improvements, and a national bank. Capturing just 39 percent of the popular vote, Lincoln considered his election a democratic mandate to pursue his agenda. A rejection of his economic program by the political leadership of the South, therefore, would be a rejection of democracy. Lincoln's program depended on the tariff, and the tariff depended on the South remaining in the Union, as did the survival of the Republican Party. For that reason, Lincoln initially pledged his support for the Corwin Resolution, which had been adopted in the waning days of the Buchanan administration. This was the original Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. It made the institution of slavery perpetual in the slave states. It had been passed by the House and the Senate, and signed by President Buchanan, but it was never ratified, because, by then, many Southern states had decided to secede. The fact that the South withdrew from the Union despite the passage of this amendment indicated other issues besides slavery motivated their secession. Foremost was the South's embrace of free trade, the antithesis of Lincoln's economic agenda.

In an attempt to prevent the impending disunion, there was a flurry of activity to reach a compromise by the Senate Committee of Thirteen and House Committee of Thirty-Three. The Crittenden resolutions and amendments were introduced to resolve the status of the territories. A Peace Convention was convened attended by 21 states, a "body [which] . . . not only [was] respectable in the standing and talents of its members, but comprised many names highest in leadership."

As his secretaries John G. Nicolay and John Hay wrote in *Abraham Lincoln: A History*,

> It is evident that Lincoln was at this time not without serious apprehensions that the threats and movements of secession might induce some of the less sturdy Republicans to appeals for concession . . .

In letters written between December 13, 1860, and February 4, 1861, Lincoln anxiously lobbied Republicans to reject all compromise:

> Prevent as far as possible, any of our friends from demoralizing themselves, and our cause, by entertaining propositions for compromise of any sort, on slavery extension. There is no possible compromise upon it, but which puts us under again, and leaves all our work to do over again.

Indeed, he continued,

> Whether it be a Mo. line, or Eli Thayer's Pop. Sov. it is all the same. Let either be done, & immediately filibustering and extending slavery recommences. On that point hold firm, as with a chain of steel.

In a letter to Secretary of State William Seward, he wrote:

> [A]ny trick by which the nation is to acquire territory, and then allow some local authority to spread slavery over it, is as obnoxious as any other. I take it that to effect some such result as this, and to put us again on the high-road to a slave empire is the object of all these proposed compromises. I am against it.

In that same letter, he declared:

> On the 21st. ult. Hon. W. Kellogg, a Republican M.C of this state whom you probably know, was here, in a good deal of anxiety, seeking to ascertain to what extent I would be consenting for our friends to go in the way of compromise . . . I am for no compromise which assists or permits the extension of the institution on soil owned by the nation.

Lincoln was successful in his efforts to rein in his fellow Republi-

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cans. Soon, Senator Clark of New Hampshire introduced a new resolution, insisting

> That the provisions of the Constitution are ample for the preservation of the Union and the protection of all the material interests of the country; that it needs to be obeyed rather than amended; and that extrication from our present dangers is to be looked for in strenuous efforts to preserve the peace, protect the public property, and enforce the laws, rather than in new guarantees for particular interests, compromises for particular difficulties or concessions to unreasonable demands.

Attempts by peace commissioners from the new Confederate government to negotiate all outstanding differences with Washington were similarly rebuffed by Lincoln. Nicolay and Hay write that

> The [Confederate] commissioners were instructed to solicit a reception in their official character, and if that were refused, to accept an unofficial interview; to insist on the de facto and de jure independence of the Confederate States; but nevertheless to accede to a proposition to refer the subject of their mission to the United States Senate, or withhold an answer until the Congress of the United States should assemble and pronounce a decision in the premises, provided the existing peaceful status were rigidly maintained.

After keeping the Confederate commissioners waiting for days under the mistaken impression that negotiations would be possible, "Seward replied confidentially, 'that it was impossible to receive the commissioners in any diplomatic capacity, or even to see them peacefully.'"

On July 4, 1861, a victorious Lincoln could declare in his first message to Congress that "No compromise by public servants could, in this case, be a cure." War was to be the only option for settling a political dispute he helped to exacerbate. For Lincoln, pursuing war became an obsession. On June 28, 1862, he wrote to Seward, "I expect to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or am conquered, or my term expires, or Congress or the country forsakes me."

Lincoln promised the North a short war. Addressing Union governors on July 3, 1862, he asserted, "If I had fifty thousand additional troops here now, I believe I could substantially close the war in two weeks." The next day, in a message to Congress, he made the same promise of a short war, but with a request for eight times the number of troops:

> It is now recommended that you give the legal means for making this contest a short, and a decisive one; that you place at the control of the government, for the work, at least four hundred thousand men, and four hundred millions of dollars.

As the North soon wearied of a war with no victory or end in sight, Lincoln expressed his concern over the growing prospect of a negotiated settlement. In a memorandum dated November 1, 1862, he wrote, "The army, like the nation, has become demoralized by the idea that the war is to be ended, the nation united, and peace restored, by strategy, and not by hard desperate fighting."

Throughout 1863 and 1864, increasing calls in the North for negotiations with the South to end the war were rebuffed by Lincoln. First, he maintained, "I do not believe any compromise embracing the maintenance of the Union is now possible." Then, he changed tack, asserting that there was no one in the South with whom he could successfully negotiate an end to the war.

> [N]o paper compromise, to which the controllers of Lee's army are not agreed, can, at all, affect that army. In an effort at such compromise we should waste time, which the enemy would improve to our disadvantage; and that would be all.

When many in the North became aware of Southern attempts to negotiate an end to the war, Lincoln responded disingenuously:

> Now allow me to assure you, that no word or intimation from that rebel army, or from any of the men controlling it, in relation to any peace compromise, has ever come to my knowledge or belief. All charges and insinuations to the contrary, are deceptive and groundless.

Finally, Lincoln dismissed the merits of peace, writing, "I am yet unprepared to give up the Union for a peace which, so achieved, could not be of much duration." Lincoln knew a negotiated peace between Washington and Richmond meant the recognition of the South as an independent country. On September 12, 1864, he wrote, "An armistice—a cessation of hostilities—is the end of the struggle, and the insurgents would be in peaceful possession of all that has been struggled for." It would spell the end of Lincoln's economic program and the Republican Party. To prevent this, he refused to cut and run, and opted to stay the course.

As he told an audience in Philadelphia on June 16, 1864,

> It is a pertinent question often asked . . . when is the war to end? . . . I do not wish to name a day a month, or year, when it is to end . . . We accepted this war for an object, a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God, I hope it will never end until that time.

In his Annual Message to Congress on December 6 of that year, Lincoln reiterated his objection to a negotiated peace:

> On careful consideration of all

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> the evidence accessible it seems to me that no attempt at negotiations with the insurgent leader could result in any good . . . Between him and us the issue is distinct, simple, and inflexible. It is an issue which can only be tried by war, and decided by victory.

Then, he added a new rationale: "The Executive power itself would be greatly diminished by the cessation of actual war."

Lincoln no longer spoke of a short war or a war nearly over; now, it was war without end:

> The important fact remains demonstrated, that we have more men now than we had when the war began; that we are not exhausted, nor in process of exhaustion; that we are gaining strength, and may, if need be, maintain the contest indefinitely.

He denied the reality of the human cost his war had inflicted on the North—the dead, the maimed, the destitute. He clung to his mandate:

> The [1864] election has exhibited another fact not less valuable to be known—the fact that we do not approach exhaustion in the most important branch of the national resources—that of living men. While it is melancholy to reflect that the war has filled so many graves, and carried mourning to so many hearts, it is some relief to know that, compared with the surviving, the fallen have been so few. While corps, and divisions, and brigades, and regiments, have been formed and fought, and dwindled and gone out of existence, a great majority of the men who comprised them are still living. The same is true of the naval service. The election returns prove this. So many voters could not else be found.

He then repeated his call that the war go on until the South unconditionally surrendered:

> They can at any moment have peace simply by laying down their arms and submitting to the national authority under the Constitution . . . No cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war and the disbanding of all forces hostile to the government.

The South surrendered unconditionally. Lincoln placed his political interests above those of the American people—and won. His war ensured that the Republican Party controlled the federal apparatus for half a century. It ushered in a time of unprecedented corruption—the "Gilded Age." It provided an ideological cover—promoting democracy—for future wars and war profiteering. As Gen. Smedley Darlington Butler observed nearly 75 years ago,

> War is a racket. It always has been . . . It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives . . . Only a small "inside" group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes.

Joseph E. Fallon writes from Rye, New York.

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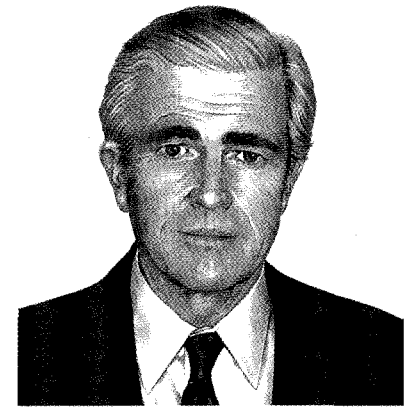
by George McCartney

Shaming



Knocked Up
Produced and distributed by Universal Pictures
Directed and written by Judd Apatow

Juno
Produced and distributed by Fox Searchlight Pictures
Directed by Jason Reitman
Screenplay by Diablo Cody

4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days
Produced by Mobra Films
Directed and written by Cristian Mungiu
Distributed by IFC Films

Thirty-five years ago, the Supreme Court discovered the constitutional right to abortion. Unbeknownst to earlier generations, it was hiding out in the 14th Amendment's implied right to privacy. Since its discovery, this right has been exercised over 50 million times. That's a lot of carnage in the name of privacy. Not surprisingly, Americans have come to question the moral cost of killing the unborn. The number of abortions performed in this country has been falling slowly but steadily. There's been a 25-percent drop since 1990.

Quick to capitalize on the public's change of heart, Hollywood has inaugurated what seems to be an anti-abortion boomlet this year. In director Judd Apatow's *Knocked Up*, a gorgeous TV newscaster played by Katherine Heigl foolishly—and, I might add, improbably—gets drunk one night and recklessly picks up a hapless schlub played by the undeniably typecast Seth Rogen. She then takes him home and allows him to impregnate her. Abortion would be the approved solution for such a hideous *faux pas*, but not for this babe. She doesn't once consider getting rid of the baby, even when she learns how feckless a loser Rogen is. He fancies himself an entrepreneur, having mounted a website that informs its subscribers which recent films display the breasts of popular actresses—surely a supererogatory exercise, given that today's movies are batting nearly a thousand on the mammary scoreboard. She is nevertheless determined to have her baby, although doing so will put her glamorous broadcast job at risk, to say nothing of her reputation for good judgment. Of course, this being a Hollywood story, the growing evidence of her condition actually boosts her ratings. Americans are so understanding.

In *Juno*, we have another pregnant young lady, this one only 16. She, too, elects to have the baby she carelessly and quite unromantically conceived. Juno (spunky Ellen Page) was bored one afternoon and decided to lose her virginity courtesy of a very surprised classmate, a nerdy kid whom she likes but, she's quick to add, is *not* her boyfriend. Finding herself gravid two months later, she decides to "nip it in the bud" and heads for her local abortion clinic, Woman Now. But before she can get through the door, she meets a classmate picketing against infant slaughter and learns that, at two months, a child *in utero* already has fingernails. This bit of biological reality clutches her heart, and she flees the abortuary. She'll have her baby and give it up for adoption. This, of course, means telling her parents. Her father is nonplussed. "I always thought of you as a girl who knew when to say enough," he sighs, adding that he'd prefer her to have been nabbed for hard drugs or driving while intoxicated.

Juno soon finds a childless couple advertising in the *Penny Saver*—where else?—for a girl in just her predicament. They turn out to be upscale yuppies living in a planned community where everyone has a three-car garage and four bathrooms. Perfect. In no time at all, Juno, her father, the couple, and their attorney are negotiating a contract. Does she want an open or closed adoption? Having no idea what the question means, Juno replies in teenspeak, "I'm just gonna, ya know, squeeze it out and hand it over to you." She'd like to "kick this old school." Her response is supposed to be winningly cute, but I'm afraid I found it quite charmless, not to mention unbelievable. The film wants us to accept Juno as an irrepressible life force who, in her own words, is "doing things way above my maturity level." I can't help thinking that most responsible parents in the audience will find her an unbearably spoiled brat in need of an old-school walloping.

I suppose there is reason to rejoice that these films aimed at a young audience dramatize alternatives to abortion. How far we've come from 1973, when *Maude*, a popular sitcom of the day, could get a laugh by having its heroine quip that her scheduled abortion was of no more consequence than having a tooth extracted. Still, I'm not entirely reassured. Both young ladies are too sunny, too self-confident to be believable as first-time mothers with no reliable support to help them bring their children into the world. True, both start screaming when their respective labors begin, but their agonies are kept brief and audience-friendly. They serve as little more than comic relief, giving the women an opportunity finally to screech unbecomingly to their fear, anger, and humiliation unchecked by feminine politeness. This is odd, since

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both films make a point of supporting the cause of women's dignity. But we're not to fret. Heigl has her baby and finds her schlub impregnator transformed into a doting, eminently marriageable father. By Hollywood standards, Juno fares even better. Neither she nor her beau has to look at their progeny. The adoptive mother swoops in and whisks the kid away, leaving them free to pick up their adolescence once more without any aftereffects. No milk-engorged breasts, stretch marks, or postpartum depression for this spunky little girl. Pretending to take an honest look at the challenge of unwed pregnancy, both films lightly dismiss the physical and emotional inconveniences that inevitably accompany childbirth, especially of the unwed variety. The question of shame, for one glaring instance, barely raises its troubling head.

A few years ago, black journalist Stanley Crouch caught some flak for saying that, when he was growing up, unwed pregnancy was considered cause for shame in Harlem. One of the most potent barriers to black advancement, he went on, is that ghetto girls no longer feel this emotion when they swell with child. Liberals, of course, accused Crouch of being heartless, but, as usual, it was they who lacked both heart and understanding. Crouch was merely reaffirming what any reasonable adult should know: Shame is a powerful prophylactic against rash behaviors of all kinds and should be applied regularly to keep us all in check. True, it can be painful to bear, but better a few suffer its discomfort than many heedlessly obey their impulses, to their own and society's detriment. Crouch could have extended his jeremiad well beyond Harlem. With shame removed from the moral equation of unwed pregnancy, white America has been catching up with black bastardy. My fear is that movies such as *Knocked Up* and *Juno* will help promote the idea that pregnancy is an equal-opportunity sport to be pursued much as one might play lawn tennis without a net to ensure there will be no losers. The grim fact is that, by abandoning the traditional rules of begetting, America has been breeding generations of innocent losers. They were once known as illegitimate children. This admittedly harsh designation for victims of adult irresponsibility once helped deter sexual carelessness.

For another consideration of unwed pregnancy, there's Rumanian director Cristian Mungiu's almost unbearably stark *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*. Here, we are well beyond shame. This film enters the realm of heart-freezing evil, refusing to gloss the consequences of sexual irresponsibility.

Mungiu tells his story with a minimum of fuss for a maximum of dismay. We are in Bucharest in the 1980's. Rumania is under the rule of Nicolae Ceausescu, who, reacting to his nation's declining birthrate, has made abortion not only illegal but punishable by up to ten years in jail. College student Gabita is willing to run the risk, albeit belatedly, now that she's been carrying her child for the duration announced so baldly by the film's title. At first, Mungiu seems to be encouraging us to take pity on the young lady, but, as the film proceeds, we learn that she is astonishingly adept at passive-aggressive manipulation. Behind her seeming doe-eyed innocence, she is a liar who thinks nothing of putting others at risk to save herself. She has enlisted her roommate, Otilia, to help her get rid of her inconvenient fetus. Otilia goes about the grim business, performing most of its incriminating tasks. When Gabita fails to reserve a hotel room for the abortion, Otilia must go herself, handing over her identity papers to the establishment's desk clerk while she is taped by a security camera. By the time Otilia has brought the abortionist to the hotel room, she has irretrievably implicated herself.

The abortionist turns out to be a ruthless predator. When he discovers Gabita's pregnancy is much more than two months along as she had originally claimed, he threatens to walk out.

Terminating a pregnancy beyond five months means he could be prosecuted for murder, he angrily explains, and he has no way of knowing how advanced Gabita is. When the girls plead with him, he at first holds fast. Then, he reckons, "Everything has its price." The price, in this case, will be Otilia's honor.

In interviews, Mungiu has refused to reveal his position regarding abortion, but there is a good deal of internal evidence that strongly suggests that he is in favor of keeping the procedure legal in Rumania. At one point, Otilia reluctantly leaves Gabita in the hotel room awaiting the passing of her baby. Otilia's boyfriend has requested she make an appearance at his mother's birthday party. Mungiu films the event head on, with Otilia in the middle of a crowded frame as her boyfriend's family cheerfully celebrates the occasion. Although it is winter outside, the women begin talking about coloring Easter eggs. Otilia dully stares straight ahead. The mixture of home, religion, and fertility takes its toll on her. Alone with her boyfriend for a moment, she reveals what's troubling her and asks him what he would do if she became pregnant. He is dumbfounded at first and then tries to rescue himself and their relationship by saying that he would take care of her. When she presses him, he finally says with little enthusiasm that he would marry her. She gives him a withering look and leaves.

Mungiu may believe that a policy of legal abortion frees women from their shameful dependence on men, but, as D.H. Lawrence once said, trust the tale, not the teller. Mungiu's film presents its story with such a clinically disinterested air that one would have to be ideologically benighted not to see abortion's horribly shaming truth—which the director shows us uncompromisingly, fingernails and all. This film is not for the faint-hearted. As such, it is a much-needed corrective to the willed blindness of our terminally cheery society. ◁

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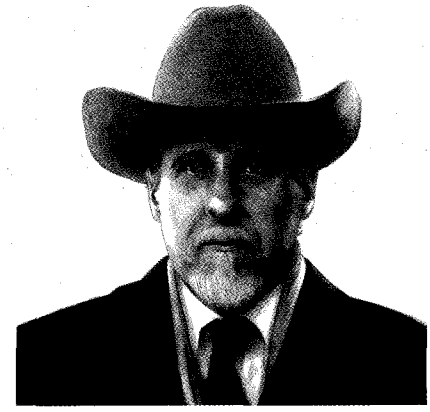
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

In the Looking Glass



The holidays were fast approaching, and, for the first time in his life, Héctor could find no joy in the prospect of the Christmas season. Homesick, guilt-ridden, pinched in his wallet by his irregular business schedule, and worn down by the rigors of patrol with the Critter Company, he felt physically and mentally exhausted. The lack of privacy afforded by the ranch house rubbed his nerves raw, as did his wife's nagging and his daughter's incessant vocalizing. AveMaría was insistent that the family begin attending services at the Assemblies of God church in Lordsburg, which meant a 160-mile round trip every Sunday. (She persisted even after he'd explained to her, patiently, that church on Sunday morning conflicted with his sworn duties as an active Critter in good standing.) And Contracepción, bored to distraction on the ranch, had recently conceived a burning ambition to become the new Britney Spears. ("I mean," Héctor overheard her explaining to her mother, "she's like, you know, so fat and pregnant and divorced and everything—it's time for her to move her lard butt over and let someone else have a turn, for a change!") In pursuit of the dream, she'd ordered all the Spears CDs from *Amazon.com* and begun singing along with Britney for three or four hours a day. Though he was too good a father to say so, her voice sounded to Héctor—who was the first to admit that, with the exception of Mexican Civil War *corridos*, he knew nothing about music—like a cat strangling on a hair ball. The sound had much the same effect on Beatriz Juárez, only more so. When Contracep suggested to him that the Pink House might be interested in having her stage a concert there some evening, Héctor understood that the sins of the father were being visited, in spades and squarely, on the father.

As little as he understood himself, Héctor understood Jacinta Ruiz even less. How could a nice girl like her chase after a man with a wife and two children? And what, really, did she want from him? True, he'd never mentioned in so many words he was married, but he was (if he did say so himself) a reasonably attractive man in the prime of life and therefore presumably attached, while she had to have noticed his wedding band. Perhaps Jacinta was what was called a skivvy—a word he'd heard in a movie set in England in the days of Queen Elizabeth I. Or perhaps, she was one of those women who couldn't control herself, like AveMaría's younger sister Carlotta, a hot number if he'd ever met one. (Luckily for him, Héctor reflected, AveMaría had got there first.) It could also be that she was simply an outrageous flirt. Then again—he had to be fair about this—Jacinta might simply be in love! For Héctor, a soft-hearted man when it came to the opposite sex in particular, this thought was particularly distressing. As a young buck back in Mexico, he'd always hated having to disappoint a woman.

He would never, never (Héctor assured himself) have crossed the threshold of the Pink House again after that devastating event in the shadows around the corner from the bar, had the Critter Company not adopted the place as its unofficial watering hole. Every Sunday now after exercises, the Critters gathered at the Pink House for beer and war stories, under the bemused gaze of the local clientele. Emboldened by training and the confidence inspired in its individual members under General Mitternacht's drilling, the Company had formed squads of three and four men each, any five of which were on posted duty twenty-four hours a day along the border between the Cedar and Potrillo Mountains. Already, Héctor had served two graveyard shifts with Jesús "Eddie," after slipping miserably out from under the warm covers at a little before midnight. "If you ever wanted to fool around on me, *mi amor*," AveMaría murmured sleepily on the second occasion, "this would be, like, the perfect excuse." The valley north of Columbus and west of the Florida Mountains had in the past two years become a major corridor for northward migration, so that the Critter units always saw plenty of action, no matter the time of day. As they were not allowed to shoot anyone, and the Border Patrol preferred to devote its investigative resources to sightings by the Minutemen on duty in the same sector, there was little the Critters could do but shake their fists, make faces, and yell at the wire jumpers, though this at least gave them a feeling of doing something.

For Héctor, visits to the Pink House were occasions of ecstatic agony—or agonized ecstasy, he couldn't have said which. Weighed down by guilt, he felt himself simultaneously lighter than air, at once older than the hills and younger than a new-birthed star. Over and again, he asked himself whence came this passion he had for Jacinta Ruiz and when, without discovering an answer. It seemed rather to have taken hold of him by degrees and imperceptibly, in response to . . . Héctor wondered what. Had she sent the first, perhaps unconscious, signals to which he'd responded, or was it the other way round? Or had they met each other halfway? Héctor inclined toward the third proposition, perhaps because, in allowing him to regard himself as something less than a cal-

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lous adulterer and Jacinta rather a fallen star than a designing woman, it was the most reassuring of the three. One way or another, what mattered now was that this secret relationship that had developed somehow between a woman named Jacinta Ruiz and a man called Héctor Villa was both real and infinitely gratifying to his heart—also, that the thing must not be permitted to proceed beyond this point. Jacinta, Héctor perceived—or thought he did—seemed pained, as well as puzzled, by his distant manner. And she doubtless wondered why he never paid a visit to the Pink House alone. His greatest worry, though, was that Jesús "Eddie" might get the wind up and confide his suspicions to Beatriz. While Héctor had implicit confidence in his friend, he could not have said the same for his friend's wife—or anyone's wife, for that matter, including his own. And yet, so far, he was guilty of nothing, absolutely nothing! (Excepting, of course, that single kiss round the corner in the twilight.)

Oppressed in almost equal measure by guilt, the demands of the holiday season, and Contracepción's relentless "rehearsals," as she called them, Héctor sought distraction in his responsibilities as a foot soldier in the Critter Company. Conscientious by nature, he took these duties seriously, even when it meant getting up at midnight and spending hours out in the desert scrub, bundled in heavy clothes against the terrible cold to hold the line against the relentless invasion from abroad. Many if not most Americans, Héctor had noticed over the years, spoke of what they referred to as "isolationists" in a manner that suggested they classified these reprobates in the same category with neo-Confederates and people who belonged to country clubs. This hostility was perplexing to him, in part because he had begun over the past year to consider himself an isolationist of a sort—though, naturally, he knew better than to say so outside the privacy of his own home. America, so far as Héctor Villa was concerned, was, quite simply, not just the one best place on earth but the only good place in a violent, immoral, and undemocratic world. What kind of American would not wish to build a wall around America the Beautiful, to keep that outside world from getting inside? Only those, he'd concluded, who, if not actually evil, were unpatriotic Americans. It was a matter of the utmost confusion and distress that President Bush himself, in every other way a paragon of the American nationalistic spirit, should be among those scoffers at isolationism, and a critic of the proposed Seven Hundred Mile Wall along the Southwest border as well. Was it possible that the President was simply out of touch with Mexico and the Mexican people? Perhaps he suffered from the delusion that the average Mexican had all the heroic and patriotic qualities of Pancho Villa himself. If only—Héctor lamented inwardly—the thing were really so!

All that was necessary to make these globaloney internationalists and unpatriots see the light, he was convinced, was to send them to work a twenty-four/seven shift on the southwest border, where they could experience sordid reality for themselves. God only knew, that reality was all-encompassing and inescapable down here. Hordes of immigrants from literally everywhere stampeding north amid clouds of dust among the cholla and sotol; armed coyotes brandishing handguns; Mexican army soldiers showing their heads from around what seemed like every other mesquite bush; Minutemen blowing whistles and shouting GPS locations into their two-way radios; drug mules scampering past like kangaroos; *agents provocateurs* of the Nation of Aztlán thrusting pamphlets advocating *Reconquista* and an end to White America into the hands of the hastening illegals; turbaned men and veiled women flitting like genies and phantoms through the night, pursued by shrieking Ku Kluxers in their white robes and pointy white hats that reminded one uncomfortably of the Washington Monument; the Ku Kluxers themselves chased by gaggles of American hippies holding signs that read WELCOME TO AMERIKA, AMIGOS! CHE LIVES!—Héctor, in his wildest imagination, had never anticipated such chaos, such a zoo. And the detritus left by the invasion was equally unbelievable: acre upon acre, square mile after square mile of thrown-away backpacks, strewn underwear, empty baby bottles, used condoms (how did anyone manage successfully to deploy a condom in circumstances such as these?), half-eaten tortillas and rounds of Indian fry bread, the remains of shish kebabs still on their metal skewers, small brass hookahs and abandoned Middle Eastern and oriental rugs, plastic Buddhas and Confucius dolls, here and there a witch doctor's rattle surrounded by a fringe of what might have been human hair, and Indonesian masks carved in what might equally have been the image of primitive devils or orangutans—all these things, taken together, representing an intergalactic rainbow of importunate human cultures.

After a week of this madness, Jesús "Eddie," overwhelmed by depression and defeatism, sought time out in a shabby *taberna* in Columbus, leaving Héctor—to his modest pride—to fight on. Christmas was upon him like the Hound of Hell. In his gravely depleted financial state, the invasion battlefield offered an almost infinite array of free gifts, all of them his for the taking. In a period of a few days, Héctor gathered a winnowing of the spoils of war and bore them home in triumph to his wife. AveMaría, for the most part gratified and impressed, acquiesced in all of these trophies, the sole exception being a pair of smallish oblong rugs, beautifully woven of the most brilliant colors and fringed at both ends, that Héctor had particularly admired. "Islamic prayer rugs," she insisted, "the work of the Assist of Evil—El Diablo himself! I won't have them in the house—what would Brother Billy Joe have to say? *¡O Jesús María y José!* You can throw them on top of that fallen-down barn out back, where the snakes come to warm themselves on nice days."

Jesús "Eddie," after a few days hanging out at the bar and having his Rio

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Abajo diction mercilessly mocked by the Mexican-Americans of Columbus, made an heroic decision to return to the front. Working together as a team late one mild December afternoon two days before Christmas, he and Héctor set out from the Juárez ranch in Jesús's Dodge truck, driving south to the border. At Columbus, Jesús "Eddie" made a left turn onto Route 9, heading west in parallel with the international line toward the boot heel. There was little traffic along the road, most of the vigilantes having returned home for the holidays, and one trail of exotic litter after another showed where alien bands had recently crossed, taking advantage of the temporary withdrawal of the patriot forces.

"Why do the *bastardos* want to live in the Rio Abajo anyway, seeing as we talk so funny?" Jesús "Eddie" demanded. "How about we follow that two-track over there on the left—see if we can jump some *mojados* coming up the *arroyo* from the border."

The truck made slow progress in the wash, and twilight was gathering already when Jesús proposed going the rest of the way on foot, carrying with them the long-handled nickel flashlights that were standard issue to border-patrol agents and the backpacks containing their survival gear. They had walked no more than two hundred yards when Jesús "Eddie" gestured violently at Héctor to get down, dropped to his hands and knees, and began crawling forward in the gravelly bottom. Héctor, surmising that he'd caught sight of something ahead, did likewise.

The clay felt unpleasantly chill and clammy to his bare hands, but there was no time to search out the gloves in his pack. Shoulder to shoulder with Jesús "Eddie," Héctor crawled on up the wash, which, having narrowed considerably, commenced now to meander, first to the left, then to the right, resulting in a sequence of blind turns.

"Not *mojados*," Jesús "Eddie" hissed, "—Islamists! You can tell by the curry smell. We're almost to them now. Get ready for a fight, *hombre*!"

It seemed to Héctor he was still speaking when, from around the next curve in the bank, two faces, side by side in the wash, appeared abruptly, not ten feet ahead. They were Mexican faces, adorned by drooping mustaches and surmounted by black baseball caps. Their owners, also on hands and knees, similarly carried light packs on their shoulders. On seeing Héctor and Jesús "Eddie," they started, then reared back in astonishment.

"*¡Hermanos!*" one of the men exclaimed. "What is it you think you are doing? You are going in the wrong direction!"

"*¡No!*" his partner exclaimed. "They are right! El Norte must be that way"—he jerked his thumb behind himself. "Our coyote—he has lost his way in the dark and is leading us back into México! *¡Maldito sea!*"

Jesús "Eddie" stared at him, confounded. "If you guys really are Mexican," he asked in a surly voice, "how come you smell like Islamists?"

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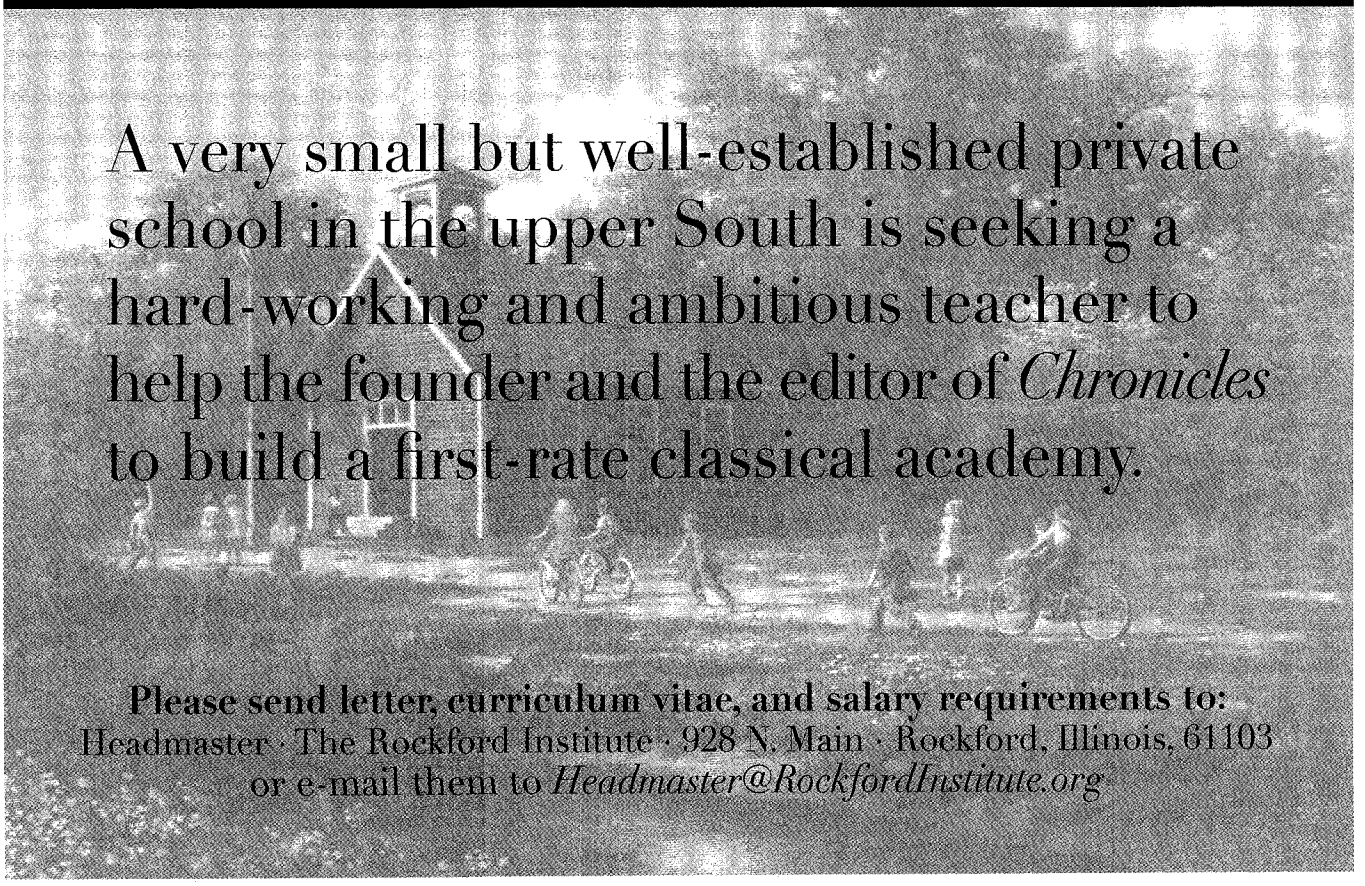
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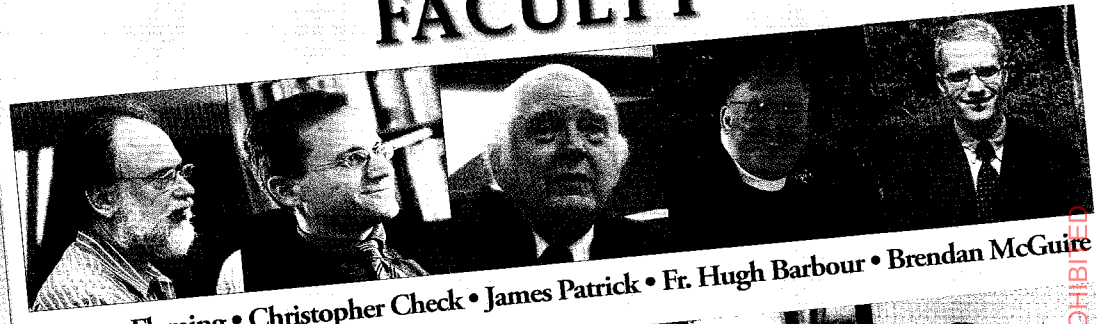

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